

622 neighbours, he judges their cases; he is their leader at ceremonies
157 and in the old days he led them to war also. He represents their
desires to the chief, and it is through him, and in consultation
with him, that the chief gives orders. Besides this each headman
• [54] (*ulifumu*) is believed to protect his own villagers from witchcraft,
'to watch over the country by night', to shield men and cattle
from the spiritual forces of evil.¹ To fit them for this task, village
headmen are treated with medicines at the 'coming out' to give
them the power of seeing and fighting witches.

622 So important is this position of village headman that legal pre-
cautions are taken 'to prevent the village headman becoming a
chief', as several informants have put it to us. It is illegal to
choose a village headman from among the kinsmen of a chief, and
it is illegal to elect the son of a village headman to that office in
any age-village of his own contemporaries, though he may per-
haps inherit the position in his father's village when his father
dies.

622 To return to the 'coming out' ceremony: when the old men
621 have made up their minds, one of them goes among the crowd of
young men, and catches hold of those they have chosen in order
of seniority: first the one who is to be leader of the senior
village of the first son of the old chief, then the leader of the
senior village of his second son, then the leader of the next senior
village of the first son, and so on. There are commonly eight age-
villages of young men; of these four will belong to the chiefdom
of the first son, four to that of the second. The eight new village
headmen are now publicly known, four in each new chiefdom.

622 The young chiefs, together with the senior headman of each,
789 are then treated with medicines that they may be impressive
643 (*nsirya*). From birth a chief undergoes periodical treatment to
make him impressive (*nsirya*) 'that we commoners may tremble
before him'. The treatment at the 'coming out' is directed
towards the same end: 'We treat him, then he will be altogether a
chief, men will respect him!' The village headmen now drink the

[192] ¹ The essential meaning of a word in one culture is often illuminated by the
meaning of a word from the same stem among neighbouring people. In this
connection it is significant that (*fwu* in Bemba and *ufwusu* in Nyanja mean
'chief', but in Ankole *abwuwu* means 'magicians' (including diviners) (*African
Political Systems*, p. 145), and among the Sukuma *abwuwu* is used in the same
sense (*Africa*, Vol. XIX, p. 14). cf. H. H. Johnston, *A Comparative Study of
the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, Vol. II, p. 270.

621 villages of the great-grandfathers' generation survived, even ritually (*vide* Document, pp. 881-5).¹

166 Men also move from one village to another and they do not always join a village of their exact contemporaries. A stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is considerably older or younger than the bulk of its members. Such movement from one village to another is now very considerable: we estimated that at least 80 per cent of the married men have at some time or other moved from the chiefdom in which they first cultivated gardens of their own. There is also movement from village to village within a chiefdom.

[681] Everyone agreed that moving is not something new. In the past a convicted witch was expelled from his village, and sometimes from the chiefdom; thieves and adulterers were also expelled or fled to take refuge with another chief (*vide infra*, pp. 118-9). But it is probable that movement between villages has increased

• [781] greatly since the imposition of European control. The main reason for moving nowadays is, as we have said, the fear of witchcraft. Subsidiary reasons are the desire to get suitable land for cultivating cash crops, the desire to be near some centre of employment (such as Tukuyu or Rungwe), and the desire to live with others of like mind, as fellow Christians or fellow pagans, fellow Moravians or fellow adherents of the 'Watch Tower' (*vide infra*, pp. 40-3).

166 Women move from one village to another even more often
591 than men, for, not only do wives move with their husbands, but
587 a girl commonly marries a man of a village other than that in which she grew up, and is later inherited by a kinsman of her dead husband who lives in yet another village. Since first wives are usually ten years younger than their husbands, and junior wives may be forty or fifty years younger, most women are inherited at least once during their lives, and some are inherited several times. The modern high divorce rate accelerates this long-established circulation of women from village to village.

¹ It is possible that the existence of villages of four generations was due to the fact that Mwaipopo continued to live long after the 'coming out' of his heir Mwanikwa—a survival not usual in traditional practice (*vide supra*, p. 30).

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

53

gardens will be small.' And the crops of one who lags behind, ²⁴¹ when his fellows have planted together, are also said to suffer. For this reason, if one woman is delayed and unable to work along with them, her friends will plant a corner of her field when they plant their own, so that the fertility of her fields may not be lost.

An educated informant explained that 'those who have learnt agriculture may think that late planting is unsuccessful because it is not the right season—the weather is wrong—but others think the failure is due to not planting at the same time as their neighbours.' Christians living on mission land, with their gardens in a block by themselves, do not trouble about planting simultaneously, but many of those living in mixed villages with fields adjoining the fields of pagans conform 'because if they do not plant with them they do not have pleasant social relations'. In some chiefdoms, however, the custom is dying even among pagans. In Porokoto's country we were told: 'The custom is now dead, men just burn higgledy piggledy. A fire blazes up somewhere. We ask, "Whose is it?" "So and so's" comes the reply. "Oh! All right!" The custom has died because the Christians are many and the chiefs have turned to the Christians; their hearts are with the Christians even though they themselves are not baptized, and about this burning of the rubbish heaps for millet they say: "What is it for? Does it avail anything?"'

Among the people of Selya the rule was traditionally less elaborate than among the Kukwe. It is polite and customary for those whose fields adjoin to call one another so that they may begin each process together. 'We speak to each other saying: "Friends, let us hoe a millet field over there, all of us, hunger comes on us."' And if a son hoes a field next to his father's his 'mothers' call their daughter-in-law to plant with them, since their fields adjoin. But the only sanctions for keeping in step in hoeing and planting are conventional; there is no suggestion that the laggard's crops will fail. If, however, a man *burns* his millet field before his neighbours have heaped their weeds, they have ground for complaint. They say: 'Why have you harmed our crops?'

Underlying the emphasis on neighbours cultivating simultaneously is the idea that the fertility of fields and crops in ear ²⁴¹ can be stolen by witchcraft and sorcery, and that if one man's ₇₅₄ ●

241 crop is conspicuously better than that of his neighbours it is at
754 their expense; he has illegally enticed the fertility or grain from
their fields into his own; he has, in the Nyakyusa phrase 'over-
stepped' his neighbours.

Ideas as to what creates 'overstepping' vary slightly in the different local groups, but everywhere it is insisted that no man should get a start of his neighbours by burning his rubbish heaps with medicines before they are ready to do so. And not only does communal burning prevent individuals 'overstepping' their neighbours, but the medicine used is said to be a direct protection against witches and sorcerers. Dependence upon medicines and the elaboration of taboos are thus associated with a technique of cultivation—burning of weeds—in which fertility diminishes rapidly, much more rapidly than it does with the technique of green manuring practised for other crops.

241 The Nyakyusa have no elaborate communal ritual of the first-fruits, emphasizing precedence, such as plays a great part among many of the Southern Bantu. Significantly, their Ngonde relatives, with a more centralized political organization, forbade any man to eat of the new maize and pumpkin leaves until these had been offered ritually, first at the ancestral grove of their overlord, Kyungu, then at the groves of their chiefs, beginning with the senior, and then to the ancestors of each family. The Kukwe say that the headman of the village should be the first to eat certain of the new crops, just as he is the first to hoe, and plant, and reap, but the people of Selya do not trouble at all about precedence in this matter.

754 Among all the Nyakyusa, however, those who have been drinking the chief's *ifingela* medicine, or medicines for protection against sorcery which return the disease to the sender, must take special precautions when eating food grown on fields fertilized with ash. Now the medicine burnt with the rubbish is said to protect the crops from witches and sorcerers, and both the chief's *ifingela* medicine and retaliatory medicines border on sorcery. The underlying idea seems to be that since those who have been using these dangerous medicines partake in some measure of the nature of sorcerers, they are in danger from food nourished by the ash of that fire.¹ The important point here is that among the

¹ The associations made here will be developed in another book on Nyakyusa symbolism.

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

55

Nyakyusa generally it is kinship groups, not villages, which eat protective medicines with certain first-fruits.

Unlike many other cattle-keeping Bantu the Nyakyusa take great pride in cultivation, men boasting about their strength in hoeing, and praising those who are diligent. Significantly, the vocabulary relating to bananas matches in richness that relating to cattle: we recorded a dozen terms—and there were said to be many more—for varieties of bananas and plantains, which are distinguished by the form and flavour of the fruit, and thirteen terms for types of cattle, distinguished by colour and markings.

Not only does success in cultivation carry prestige in itself, but it provides the wherewithal for hospitality, on which status in a Nyakyusa community turns. To be respected a man must entertain his neighbours with food and millet-beer. Control of grain and vegetables to do this depends upon his own effort in hoeing, as well as upon having wives and sons to work with him. We have seen how the laggard among the Kukwe believes that the fertility of his gardens will be sapped by his neighbours being ahead. There is thus considerable social pressure compelling both men and women to cultivate diligently. At the same time, however, no individual should be too conspicuous. Each must keep in step in cultivation with his neighbours; and though his fields may be a little larger than the average, they must not be a great deal larger. The area cultivated (visible crops and stubble) by seven compound families on the Lake-shore plain in 1935 averaged 6.13 acres per family; which, divided by the number of members in each family, gave rather over half an acre per head (men, women, and children) or 1.3 acres per adult. The acreage ranged from 1.99 to 0.61 per adult.¹

Cultivation thus involves co-operation primarily within elementary and compound families, but it also involves village co-operation, in that neighbours hold land together, help one another in some measure, and try to carry out each process simultaneously.

The pressure of neighbours still helps to keep laggards up to the mark, and also to keep the most energetic from getting far ahead. But the village control over cultivation is diminishing for, as we have seen, the custom of keeping in step is no longer strictly insisted upon even among the Kukwe, nor does it apply

¹ Monthly report of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu District, July 1933. Figures supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu, 1935.

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

57

stand protected from insects: hence his title 'he of the heap of hot ashes' (*ugwakyemo*, *vide supra*, p. 34). The protection of their cattle from raiders by day, and witches by night, was one of the main co-operative activities of the village, and each herd-group within the village was particularly concerned with the protection of its own cattle. For the boys of one herd-group the association is very close since they are together on the pasturage for the greater part of the day. Friendships then formed sometimes last a lifetime. [572]

A few rich men choose to herd their cattle separately from those of their neighbours. 'They are the men who have many cattle! They want to show off their herd, so that men may say: "That's the herd of so and so." ' Sometimes their sons, against orders, foregather with other herd-boys on the pasturage, but they are careful to bring home the herds separately. We knew three men near Rungwe who were spoken of as herding their cattle separately, though in fact their sons often joined friends in the pasturage. To herd alone is regarded as somewhat ostentatious,¹ and only a few individuals do it. 231 476 556

Many rich men do not even keep all their cattle at their homesteads for fear of the jealous witchcraft of their neighbours. Instead, they disperse their herds among friends in other villages (of their own or neighbouring chiefdoms) believing that the cattle may in that way escape danger. Porokoto explained: 'We place cattle with friends (*ukufufya*) on account of sickness and death. Supposing I have three or four cows, and they all calf, but the calves die, then I place the cows with friends. People say: "The cows will escape in another village or chiefdom." If, when cattle die and are cut up, wounds are found in their stomachs,² then the owner places the others with friends.' Not all of them are sent to the same place. 231 476 556 754

The fear of witchcraft was traditionally, and is still, the main reason for placing out cattle, but nowadays they are sent away for other reasons also: Nyakyusa living around Rungwe often send cattle to friends on the other side of the mountains in Mbeya district, where grazing is particularly good, and wealthy Christians place out cattle because their wives, working single-handed, 231 476

¹ A beast which gores others may be herded apart without any imputation of pride to the owner.

² Taken as evidence that they have been killed by witchcraft, *vide infra*, p. 116.

574 African churches which countenance polygyny. The difficulty is
184 partially overcome in some well-to-do Christian families by
hiring labour to work in their fields and to fetch water and wood,
and by offering visitors coffee or tea, which are easily prepared,
[182] in place of home-brewed beer; nevertheless the conflict between
the value of hospitality (to which pagan and Christian alike subscribe, though they define it rather differently) and the value of monogamy, is often acute.

621 The mutual obligations of neighbours are not confined to feeding one another, for neighbours share with relatives the obligation of giving sympathy and assistance at the various crises in Nyakyusa life; the concept of *ukwangala* includes keeping on good terms with people by being sympathetic and obliging.

764 All the members of a village (except young children) are
621 obliged to attend every burial of an adolescent or adult in that village; they go to mourn the death of a neighbour or condole with one who is burying a 'son', for if a man dies while his father (or father's full brother, or his own senior brother) is yet alive, he is often buried in his 'father's' homestead.¹ Where a youth or man is buried by his 'father', his fellow villagers must attend the funeral also, but boys and young men need not go to a funeral in their fathers' village unless it is a village-mate of their own who is being buried.

● [754] Funerals are occasions for feasting and dancing, so the obligation 'to mourn one another' (*ukulelanela*) does not press hardly, and the Nyakyusa feeling is that no one would fail to come unless he were a witch, and fearful lest his victim rise from the grave and denounce him. 'If a man does not go to his neighbour's burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him. Why else do you not come to bury him?"' Failure to come is certain evidence that the truant is 'a harsh man who does not keep on good terms with people (*nkali, atikwangala kanunu nabandu*)'.

764 One neighbour, 'he who went about most with the dead man', is appointed by the headman of the village to help the relatives dig the grave, and village neighbours must also bring small gifts of food and firewood for the entertainment of the many guests.

¹ A married man whose 'fathers' are dead, or do not choose to exercise their right to bury him, is buried at his own home, and a woman who has borne a child is buried at her husband's home.

621 then if the father says his son has done wrong his neighbours
572 reply: "You have caused him to do wrong yourself. Did you
suppose him to be a boy that you did not provide marriage-cattle
for him?" Then the father becomes more ready to pay damages
for his son.' And again, 'If a young man finds that his father
objects to his marrying the girl he loves, he complains to his
father's neighbours (*pamafumu abapalamani ba gwise*). Then they
discuss the matter and say to the father: "Do you want him to
teach you a lesson by taking a chief's wife or daughter, for whom
many cattle must be given?" So the father agrees.'

768 Neighbours are concerned, too, to see a fair distribution of a
621 deceased fellow's estate, and the fulfilment of the heir's obliga-
tions to his wards. 'It is not the relatives, but "the fathers of the
village" who watch over a young boy's interests when his father
is dead' (*vide infra*, p. 106). We listened to one discussion of a
• [584] quarrel over inheritance which was believed to have led to kins-
men working sorcery against each other. At this discussion four
village neighbours of the sick man (thought to be suffering from
the sorcery of his father's brother's son), as well as ten relatives,
attended.

684 The father's neighbours are also asked to mediate when a son
593 has wronged his father and seeks forgiveness. For example,
621 Mwangobola's son had committed adultery with his father's
783 wife. He paid six head of cattle and then went off to the coast,
where he remained a long time. When he returned he brought
two cows and approached his father's neighbours, asking them
to take the cows to his father. When they took the cows his father
said: 'He must find a bull as well, and brew beer, because he is
my eldest son.' So he got a bull and brewed beer, and the father
also brewed. 'Then', said the old man who reported the case,
'the fathers of the village came together and the bull was killed
and they ate the meat and drank the beer. . . . Thus the son made
friends with his father.'

621 Here we have the ritual of reconciliation between relatives in
783 which neighbours of the senior must participate, for their anger
is held to be as dangerous to the junior as that of his senior rela-
tive. Informal giving of advice merges into the practice of arbitra-
tion, and of murmuring against a wrong-doer, and thus, it is
thought, causing him misfortune. These latter practices are dis-
cussed in ensuing chapters,

CHAPTER V

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

a. *Witchcraft and 'the breath of men'*

IN the Nyakyusa view two of the main co-operative activities of a village are defence against witches, and the punishment of wrong-doers through sickness brought upon them by the murmuring of their fellows. Fellow villagers are 'members of one another' as much on account of this mystical interdependence as on account of their economic co-operation and enjoyment of each other's company. The village headmen are spoken of as the leaders in the 'war by night' against witches, as they are leaders in war by day, and it is they also who are foremost in bringing 'the breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) on a wrongdoer, so that his body becomes cold, and he falls ill. We must therefore examine the concept of witchcraft and of this 'breath of men' in order to understand village relationships.

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i. *The nature of witchcraft*

The Nyakyusa believe that certain people have pythons (*isota*) in their bellies which give them power to harm men and cattle, by throttling, tramping, wounding, and kicking them. These are the witches (*abalosi*). They are said to fly by night on their pythons, or 'on the wind', either singly or in covens, to attack a chosen victim, and to leave on their beds their skins, which 'can feel nothing'. So closely are the witch and his pythons identified that if a python is killed the witch will die. The pythons are thought to be usually inherited from one or other parent, children of both sexes inheriting from either father or mother: children are 'born with witchcraft in their stomachs', and it is developed by accompanying a parent on his or her evil errands. However, not *all* children of a witch are necessarily witches. 'If a man witch marries a woman witch then the whole family are witches, but if the man is pure (*mwelu*), and the woman only a bit of a witch, then she may say to herself when she first bears a child:

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754 "This time I will respect my husband and leave the child to him", but the next one she makes her own.' Occasionally, it is said, pythons may be acquired in childhood from a woman, or perhaps even a fellow herd-boy, who is a witch, and who transfers his or her witchcraft by giving the child some mysterious substance to eat, but it is the inherited character of witchcraft which is emphasized.

754 Witchcraft (*ubulosi*) is sharply distinguished from sorcery
763 (*ubutege*), that is, the illegal use of destructive medicines, for it is a physiological condition, not merely the manipulation of certain materials. The pythons are believed to be visible in an autopsy, a 'swollen bowel' (*ubula*) in a corpse being the typical mark of a witch. 'When the bowel is swollen, they take it out and say: "It is a python, he was a witch".' Some educated Nyakyusa maintain that the 'swollen bowel' is, in some cases at least, acute tape-worm; however that may be, the condition of the bowel is taken as conclusive evidence. 'If', said Mwangwanda, 'a man is accused of witchcraft during his lifetime, and then at the autopsy his bowels are found not to be swollen, people admit his innocence, saying: "We accused him falsely, see, he was pure!"'

ii. *The supposed activities of witches*

754 The typical crime of the witch, in Nyakyusa belief, is to harm men and cattle, and the motive is greed. The pythons are thought to lust for meat and milk, hence witches go in dreams by night to 'eat people inside', and to milk the cows of their neighbours. 'It is said', explained one of our friends, 'that throttling (*ukupita*) is in order to eat delicious food. The witches say that human flesh is delicious, and the milk of cows is also delicious' (cf. Document, p. 218). Another friend elaborated further: 'People say that it is the pythons of a witch that cause him to go and bewitch (*ukuloga*) the milk, because they wish to drink milk. When he has throttled the cows they are satisfied. And they are satisfied with human flesh when "he of the pythons" has eaten a man. So I hear. I have heard too, that if the pythons smell meat (of an animal killed for eating) and if people grudge meat to him (or her) of the pythons, then the pythons will fly with him to throttle people and eat them. Similarly smelling milk leads to the throttling of cows.' The stock myth of witchcraft (cf. Document, p. 217) is about a

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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woman who was once caught by her husband when she came home during the night with human flesh and began to cook it. Domestic fires are thought to become infected, because the witches are in the habit of roasting human flesh over them; sometimes, it is said, they use the victim's hearth, sometimes their own. Fear of such contamination by witches was one of the reasons for clearing out the ashes and lighting new fires, at the new year, and when an epidemic or other misfortune threatened (*vide infra*, p. 121).

The human flesh eaten is always spoken of as that of living victims, never that of corpses, as in some other areas, though the living die of the witches' attacks. Further, it is believed that witches kill people in order to feast on the beef of cows killed at the funeral. 'To what', said old Mwandesii, 'are the many deaths among us due? They are due to meat!' So strong was this feeling that at the end of 1935 the chiefs and village headmen of a number of chiefdoms stretching from Mwaya on the Lake to Mwakeleli in the hills (but not including the western Nyakyusa chiefdoms), decided to abandon the custom of killing many cows at a funeral. 'There is', they said, 'too much death in the country, the witches are killing people so as to have meat. Let us go back to the old custom and kill few cows. . . . If anyone complains that at a burial he was given no meat to eat, he is a witch, and we will turn him out of the country.' Formerly, we were told, two was the maximum number of cows killed at a funeral, and they were not killed until the witch had been discovered by the ordeal.

The theme of the witches' lust for meat is elaborated in various ways. It is said, for example, that the witches never use their own teeth when they go to eat a victim but like to borrow the victim's teeth, and that if startled, they may go off with the teeth altogether. One whose teeth have been used by the witches and then put back, knows about it in the morning because he finds his teeth rather loose. Most fearful of all, those who dream of being chased by witches hear them boasting to one another: 'We will all eat!'

It is meat and milk, the most prized foods of the Nyakyusa, which are commonly spoken of as exciting the greed of witches. Millet (from which beer is brewed), beans, and rice, are said to be subject to occasional attacks by witches, e.g. millet (or beans, or rice) ripening in the fields, or drying in the sun, is thought to get

754 less when 'he (or she) of the pythons' has passed by. Mwaisamo explained: 'They say that if the owner of pythons or the owner of medicines passes when food has been spread out to dry, the food will disappear. He bewitches it (*ukuloga*). It is as if he hankers after the food in his heart, and it disappears and becomes less.' Nevertheless, of the thirty-eight accusations of witchcraft recorded, none actually turned on loss of grain or pulse. We heard also that a witch may spoil a brewing of beer, causing it to taste bitter, but again we could trace no case of this.

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831 The lust of witches for good food is constantly emphasized by the Nyakyusa and, unlike some other Bantu people, they do not make a direct connection between witchcraft and sex: there is no suggestion of *incubi* or *succubae* such as play a great part in Pondo thought,¹ and sexual dreams are not taken as evidence of witchcraft. The facts that the witches are 'witches by virtue of 'pythons in the stomach', that they always go naked, and fly through the air riding their pythons when on their evil nocturnal errands, suggest sexual associations, but we cannot prove that the Nyakyusa are conscious of such symbolism. It is, however, significant that the word commonly used for working witchcraft, 'throttling' (*ukupita*), is also used as a polite word for sexual intercourse, and that the other word for working witchcraft *ukuloga*² (passive: *ukulogigwa*) is similar to *ukulogwa*, meaning to copulate. Bestiality and homosexuality between a grown man and a boy (but not between two youths) are spoken of as witchcraft (*ubulosi*), and sex play between girls, including stretching of the vaginal opening, is called *ubugalagala*, a word used for the cunning—the wicked cleverness—of witches.

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841 An association is also made between witchcraft on the one hand and menstruation and pregnancy on the other. A woman who is a witch is said to pass on her witchcraft to her child by neglecting the menstruation taboos before the child is yet conceived. 'It starts when a woman is menstruating, then she begins to give the child her cunning (*ubugalagala*).' Some of the menstrual blood is

¹ cf. Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 273-89.

² *Uhuloga* and *ubulosi* are from the same root. For its meaning in other Bantu languages cf. H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. II, pp. 503ff. Also E. J. and J. D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen*, p. 250; C. M. N. White in *Africa*, 1948 (Vol. XVIII), pp. 83 ff.; H. H. Johnston, *A Comparative Study of Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, Vol. II, p. 416. The close similarity of meaning in a number of languages is striking.

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

95

believed to remain in a woman and, if she has neglected the taboos, this blood 'rots' the child later conceived (cf. Document, p. 219). This connection is insisted upon, though witchcraft inherited from the father is spoken of as being carried directly in his blood, which is thought to be transferred to his wife during intercourse. 754 841

Furthermore, a pregnant woman is believed to have some of the attributes of a witch. She, like a witch, causes grain and pulse to diminish if she passes near by when it is spread out to dry, or greets women who are stamping or grinding grain. If she speaks or comes too close 'the child inside catches hold of the food, and it disappears'. And if she should speak inadvertently, forgetting that she is pregnant, she must throw a stone or a piece of stick into the grain, or take a little of the flour in her hand, otherwise the women will say: 'She is proud, that girl, she is a witch, why is she talking?' and it is thought that she will have a miscarriage. A pregnant woman, like a witch, and one who has been using medicine, is spoken of as 'heavy' (*asito*) in contrast with one who is 'empty' (*bwan*), having nothing in the belly, and Mwaikambo explained that, 'When they speak of a pregnant woman being "heavy", they think that perhaps the foetus is witchcraft.' The foetus and the python of witchcraft are felt to be somewhat alike; but in most situations they are clearly distinguished, and indeed it is held that a woman may have both. If the afterbirth is delayed it is said that the woman is herself a witch, and her python is closing up the vaginal passage, so that the afterbirth cannot come away. A pregnant woman is not spoken of as a witch unless she harms someone by neglecting the taboos connected with her state, and her husband, who must keep the same taboos, may also be called a witch if he breaks them. 754 843

Sickness and death among men and cattle, and a diminution in the milk yield of cows, are held to be common results of witchcraft, and any 'unnatural' event, such as a case of bestiality, or of sodomy between a grown man and a boy (not between two youths), or of intercourse between a young man and an old woman, or of unusual behaviour among animals or birds, is taken as evidence that witches are at work. It is the 'unnatural' element that is emphasized (cf. Document, p. 225). An owl hooting on one's roof, and someone staring at one, are also taken as indications of witchcraft. 754 [797]

iii. *'The defenders' and 'the breath of men'*

787 Proof of the activity and identity of witches is sought first in
● 754 the dreams of victims and of 'the defenders' (*abamanga*) of his
791 village who are believed to have power to see and to fight witches
in dreams. As we have seen, the witches are believed to leave their
bodies sleeping and to fly through the air to the house of the man
against whom they have a grudge, and there to enter his body
while he sleeps, and either 'throttle' (*ukupita*), 'trample' (*uku-
kwanga*), or 'eat' (*ukulya*) his inside. In the morning, or during the
night, the victim wakes up more or less conscious of what has
happened to him. If they come often, many nights running, he
falls sick and may die, unless he takes steps to defend himself.
'The defenders' (*abamanga*) are believed to be able to see and
recognize the identity of the witches and to counter them in two
ways. First by turning them back at night, saying: 'Where are you
going to throttle your fellow? Go back!' and then driving them off
with spears or striking a witch's python, so that the witch dies;
and secondly, by reporting to neighbours and to the political
authorities the names of the people they have seen engaged in
witchcraft. An ordinary person can never recognize the witch who
attacks him, even though he may be conscious that he is being
throttled. And all these things happen in dreams: 'The witches
go out in dreams to throttle people.' 'It is in dreams that "the
defenders" recognize them.' Certain dreams, interpreted by a
traditional symbolism, are taken as signs of being bewitched: 'If
I dream that someone comes to fight me, perhaps he beats me
with a stick, perhaps he overwhelms me and crushes me down
to earth, perhaps he hits me with his fist; then I wake up and tell
people: "Last night they came to throttle me." ' 'If I recognize
people who come to fight me in my dreams that means I have
myself the power of defence; if I do not recognize them then I
have not.' 'If I dream that I am flying alone through the air
high up at night, that means they have come to throttle me.'
'If I wake up suddenly at night in fear and sweating, even though I
do not recollect the dream, I know they have come to throttle me.'
'Dreams of being chased, of being beaten, of the house burning,
of one coming to the door and weeping for me as if I were dead,
these are all signs of witchcraft.' Close friends tell one another

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

97

their dreams—provided they have not dreamed of attacking one another—and when more than one of them has dreamed of X as an aggressor, then the presumption is very strong that X is a witch. Dreams to the Nyakyusa are the stuff of religious reality, and the very close association between witchcraft and dreams is apparent in the language—*inyosi* meaning a dream, and *abulosi* (the same root in the abstract noun class) meaning witchcraft. It is perhaps also significant, that *abwaga* means to dream, and *abwagwa* (in the passive form) means to be killed. Restless nights are taken as proof that either the witches or ancestors are troubling a man: 'We do not sleep' (*abwagwa*) is the formal phrase in which village headmen or priests notify the chief that something is amiss in the country, and a ritual is required; and an ordinary person using the same phrase implies that he is harried either by the ancestors or by witches. 'You may sleep or you may not' (*abwaga*) is the commonest form in which a threat of witchcraft is made.

The vision and power of 'the defenders' (*abamanga*) comes from the same source as the power of the witches,¹ from pythons in the belly, the essential difference between the witches and 'the defenders' being that the latter use their power in accordance with law and morality, while the witches act for selfish ends, and their activities are illegal. This close association of 'the defenders' with the power of witchcraft is apparent in language, *abamanga* being sometimes used almost synonymously with *abwaga* for 'to bewitch', while *abamanga* means 'the defenders'.² There are, moreover, certain differences between the pythons of witches, and those of 'defenders'. In the first place, the condition of 'the

¹ For similar concepts among the Thonga and Asande of N. A. Janod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. II, p. 318; E. E. Evans-Prichard, *Witchcraft, Sorcery and Magic among the Asande*, p. 224 ff.

² cf. the Bantu language discussed by R. J. R. Moore in *Africa*, Vol. XIII, 1940, pp. 211 ff. and *Bantu Studies*, Vol. 15, 1941, pp. 37 ff.; the note on the use of this root in a number of languages in *Africa*, Vol. XVI, 1942, pp. 119-20; and C. M. N. White in *Africa*, Vol. XVIII, 1944, pp. 82-202.

I translate *-manga* in Nyakyusa as 'mystical power', *abwanga* 'to exercise mystical power' (for good and evil), and *abamanga* as 'those possessing mystical power', with the further implication that they use this power for defence. Writing in *Africa*, Vol. IX, 1936, pp. 82, and Vol. X, 1937, pp. 263 ff., we translated *abwanga* as 'defender witches' and *abwagwa* as 'aggressor witches'. On further reflection, however, I have preferred to confine 'witch' and 'witchcraft' to those acting in a manner disapproved by their society, since this is common usage, and for want of a better term I call *abamanga* 'the defenders'.

754 defenders' is not visible at an autopsy. Secondly, it is maintained
787 that while a witch has several pythons, a defender has only one,
791 and whereas witchcraft is always inherited or acquired in early
childhood, a python of defence may be acquired later, through
drinking medicine. Old Mwandesi, recognised by the Nyakyusa
themselves as an authority on law and history, explained it to us
thus: 'Some are born with pythons; they are those with many
pythons, perhaps three. Some get them from medicine made of
leaves which is given them to drink at the "coming out", they
have only one, it is they who watch over the cattle, they are the
village headmen (*amafuma*). He who has many pythons, who is
born with them, having inherited them, euns them secretly at his
home. He takes them out and euns them, then swallows them
again, they are his intestines. Such a man is a great witch; he is
the kind who is convicted of witchcraft. But the village headman
who has got his python through medicine has only one, he does
not eun it, he is not convicted of witchcraft, he only detects the
witches in dreams. When he begets a child the latter will have
one python only. If his son or daughter goes about throttling
people, then his father says: "Where did you get many pythons?
See! I have only one. It is you woman! (accusing his wife)." So
they submit themselves to the poison ordeal. The man vomits and
the ordeal catches the woman.' Mwandesi contradicted himself
in this statement, first suggesting that the power of defence was
only acquired through drinking medicines, and then that the
child of a village headman inherited one python from his father.
Most Nyakyusa maintain that the power of defence can be
acquired in either fashion. The medicines drunk at the 'coming
out' develop it even in an 'empty' man, but many men, including
assistant headmen and ordinary citizens who are not specially
treated at the 'coming out', are believed to have it. It is asserted
that no women have it, though many of them are spoken of as
witches, and in particular instances informants implied that some
women 'saw' the witches (cf. Document, pp. 252-3).

Mbukile confirmed Mwandesi's main point, saying: 'Some of
us are empty, pure (*bwaka*), we have no pythons, not one; some are
'defenders' and pure, they are those who watch over the country;
such a man has only one python to watch over his country. The
ruler of the country, the chief, also has one python; for both
village headmen and chief watch over the country. Some are

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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witches, they have two or three pythons, it is they who are caught by the poison ordeal.⁷⁵⁴ 'Watching over the country' implies⁷⁵⁷ detecting the witches and turning them back, and also reporting⁷⁴¹ them the next morning to the authorities. Particularly 'the defenders' watch over the cows, and they are said actually to increase the milk yield by sucking the milk from the teats and spitting it out again. Mbukile explained this also: "The defender" watches over the cows. He takes milk in his mouth and squirts it on the ground; he does not swallow it in his dream. The next day the milk will be plentiful.' A village headman we knew enlarged further on the point: 'If a man is the son of a true village headman and goes to drink the milk of cows, he drinks from the teats, but his python vomits the milk and the next day the owner of the cow will find much milk and say: "He who came last night was the child of a village headman (alifema). He was good, he was not a witch, no, but a benefactor." So they say. But if a real witch goes to bewitch the cows then the milk dries up altogether for a time. The owners of the cows will milk none for many days. He is a witch indeed.' Similarly, it is held that if witches can be compelled to vomit the human flesh they have eaten, 'to put back the meat', the patient will recover.

'Emptiness' and 'innocence' are associated in several contexts; and vomiting, spitting, and confession (*shanywa*) are all taken as expressions of good will and repentance. *Ukama*, for example, means both 'to spit' and 'to forgive', the symbolism being interpreted in this way: 'If a father is angry with his son or daughter he may say some day, "I forgive you now" and spit on the ground: all the anger that is in him comes out like spit.' Blowing water from the mouth is an essential element in prayers to the ancestors, and the close association between them is apparent in the language: *shaputa* meaning 'to blow out water' and *shaputa* (the reflexive form) meaning 'to pray',⁷⁸⁸ with the implication of confessing whatever anger or grudge a man may have in his heart. Kasiile, the rainmaker, explained: 'This prayer with water is to confess everything. If I do not pray with water then something is left within.'

⁷ For a similar concept among the Thonga cf. Jourd. *The Life of a South African Tribe*, Vol. II, p. 271.

⁸ The Zande symbolism is very similar: cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Zande Thinking' in *Indian Mind and Society*, Vol. XIX (1970), pp. 17-18.

576 In Nyakyusa society it is senior relatives who formally blow
754 out water to express their good will, not suspected witches, as
among the Azande. But the admission of anger by the supposed
witch or justly shocked neighbours, and their wishes for the
patient's good health, are anxiously sought (*vide infra*, p. 101),
for such good wishes are thought to lead directly to his recovery.

754 The reverse of this emphasis on the value of confessing anger
is the belief that the man who nurses a grudge in secret without
ever admitting it is the most dangerous enemy, whether he be a
senior relative muttering to the shades, or a neighbour using
witchcraft, or a rival who has turned to sorcery. Mwambuputa, a
conservative village headman without any school education, was
very explicit on the point: 'The root of witchcraft is this—when
two people have a quarrel in their hearts and do not let it out.
Maybe I have a neighbour who hates me, but he never lets it out,
he says nothing and we seem to be on friendly terms—these are
the quarrels that are pregnant with witchcraft. But if he lets it
out and tells me that I have wronged him in some way then the
quarrel has no menace in it. It is when he lets nothing out and
stays silent, though angry in his heart, that he comes in dreams
to throttle me. That is the root of witchcraft.' Hence the insis-
tence on one accused of witchcraft admitting guilt (*vide infra*,
p. 112).

754 The defenders' are powerful, but it is believed that witches
791 are occasionally able in dreams to get past them, and throttle
men against whom they have a grudge, or their cows. '“The
defenders” do not go out in dreams to fight the aggressors every
night. A witch wanting to throttle a man comes night after
night.’ ‘Nowadays it is much worse than it used to be, since the
Europeans prevent us reporting them, and getting them stopped;
“the defenders” work hard, but some nights they sleep without
dreaming and the witches get past.’

754 Although the primary function of 'the defenders' is to see and
791 drive off witches, nevertheless they are also thought to use their
power to punish a wrong-doer. In doing so they are assisted by
the witches, but, the Nyakyusa argue, the village headman who
626 leads this night attack in dreams is no more breaking the law than
he is when he fines a thief in court. In both cases he is exerting
power to maintain the law. The Nyakyusa have a lively fear of
shocking their neighbours, for it is held that the shocked astonish-

ment of fellow villagers (*bikawiga*) or their angry murmuring (*bikawimanya*) will bring on wrong-doers 'the breath of men' (*embepo rya banda*) causing them, or their children, or cattle, to fall ill, and this breath is the power of the pythons exerted by 'defenders' and witches acting together. We asked Mbukile whether 'the defenders' really came to choke a proud, quarrelsome person. 'Mother! They come. "The defenders" and the witches all call one another. They all go. "The defender" is not angry (at the attack), he says, "The man killed himself, he was a quarrelsome fellow!"' And another friend explained: 'If a woman witch wishes to choke her husband, perhaps the first night "the defenders" will turn her back, but then she will plead with them and explain that her husband is a bad man and ill-treats her, then perhaps on the second night they will change their minds and come and help her. Yes, "the defenders" turn round sometimes and throttle people.'

'The breath of men' is thought to cause prolonged illness but not death, and should a death occur then a charge of witchcraft may be brought, and the suspects be required to drink the poison ordeal. 'We said, it is forbidden to kill a man. We others were afraid, although we had disliked the victim ourselves, we feared at some later time the witch would kill us.' All our informants accepted this view in theory, but in practice several cases in which the supposed victims died were cited as instances of 'the breath of men' (see table, pp. 206-8).

The effect of 'the breath of men' is spoken of as 'the curse' (*itigwano*)¹ and its typical symptom is sterility, or a paralysis of the legs, which, it is thought, can only be cured when the sinner repents and reforms his behaviour, providing at the same time a feast of beer and meat for men of his village or, if it be against his father that he has sinned, of his father's village. At the feast it is essential that the men of the village should admit their responsibility for the sickness, and express hopes for the recovery of the patient. 'Formerly, they would pray and pray, they would let out all their anger, saying: "Certainly we were angry, it was us, but now it is all over." Then life would come back to the sick man and he recovered' (cf. Document, p. 240).

We see then, that a clear distinction is made by the Nyakyusa

¹ *Itigwano* is not used in the Kukwe dialect, but is common usage in Selya, on the Lake-choo plain, and in Ngunda.

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626 between the legal and illegal use of power derived from pythons. The breath of men' is the general public opinion of a whole group—of an age-village or chiefdom—acting through the 'python power' of those of its members who happen to be possessed of it, led by one or more village headmen and directed against a single person. On the other hand, individuals proved to be witches are those believed to have acted by themselves, either against the public opinion of their age-village or chiefdom, or at any rate without securing its support. No pagan Nyakyusa doubts that witchcraft is bad, or that 'the breath of men' is used to bring legitimate punishment on evil-doers, but the classification of particular cases varies somewhat with the point of view of the individual. The victim of 'the breath of men' may speak indignantly about the attacks of 'the witches'.¹

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576 The defenders' are regarded as pillars of society, and their exercise of python power as right and proper, yet no one readily admits to the possession of such power; it is a proud and boastful thing to do, and not good manners. Informants, when discussing it, rarely spoke as if they had direct knowledge of the power, usually prefacing their remarks with: 'It is said that', or 'I hear that'. This was true even of village headmen who are all believed to have the power. One such man, to whom a direct question was put, replied: 'I would not go so far as to boast of it myself, but other people in my village have it.' In villages of mature and old men, others besides the headmen are often known by name as having it; and besides this there is the general belief that in each such age-village 'some people', not specified, have it as well.

6c. Witchcraft, 'the breath of men' and morality

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[626] Now the power of witchcraft and 'the breath of men' is held to operate primarily within one age-village, and it is denied that it can ever extend beyond the chiefdom. 'How could the people of another chiefdom "eat" a man?' said the village headman, Mwa-fala, 'It is those here'. The typical accusations are against neighbours and wives or co-wives and, nowadays, against fellow workers living in the same camp (cf. table, p. 198). The fact that it is within the village that witchcraft is thought to operate is

¹ cf. Geoffrey Wilson, 'An African Mentality' in *Africa*, Vol. IX (1938), pp. 87-8, for such a case.

shown by the way in which one fearing witchcraft, or accused of practising it, moves to another village. Sometimes he goes to another chiefdom, but often he only moves to another village in the same chiefdom—the chief himself may feel safe in one village of his country and not in another (vide Document, p. 190). It is on his fellow villagers that the good man depends for protection, and it is they whom the evil-doer fears.

Accusations within the lineage are rare. At first we were told that they did not occur at all; later a number of elderly informants agreed that this was not true—'the young men have misled you', they said; but careful inquiry only elicited three concrete cases¹ of witchcraft within the lineage (cf. table, p. 204). As we have seen, fellow members of a lineage normally live in different villages, and just how the idea of attacks by kinsmen is reconciled with the theory of village defence is not clear. Possibly it is argued that the witch attacks while visiting his kinsman, for it is in terms of visiting that the effect of 'the breath of men' on erring sons or younger brothers is explained. Where 'the breath of men' is thought to have affected someone of another village, it is argued that he or she came frequently to visit in the village of the attackers (cf. Document, p. 237), and the heir who neglects his elder brother's or father's funeral rites, and who is thought to suffer from 'the breath' of the deceased's justly indignant neighbours, is supposed to fall ill when he comes to their village to enter into his inheritance, or to make arrangements for the disposal of his property.

Even within the village it is the immediate neighbours that are primarily concerned in a case of suspected witchcraft. In the large villages of the plains the leader of a section, 'he of the heap of hot ashes', has the specific duty of protecting the herd which stands in the smoke of his fire against witches; and in smaller villages, also, a witchcraft case commonly begins with murmuring among a few next-door neighbours. Suspicion of witchcraft falls first on a member of the same village-section, then on a fellow villager; only rarely, and in peculiar circumstances, does it fall on a member of another village, and never on someone outside the chiefdom.

Differences of rank are relatively slight in Nyakyusa society

¹ A possible fourth is quoted on p. 246, but the exact relationship of the accused to the victim was not known to our informant.

● 754 and scarcely affect accusations of practising witchcraft, save that
559 the chief himself is never accused, though he is often thought to suffer from the witchcraft, or 'the breath', of his men. The commoners, 'the black people' (*abatita*), are said to be the real witches, but a study of cases shows that junior brothers and sons of the chiefs are, in fact, sometimes accused. Village headmen may be accused just like the humblest of their followers, and men are accused at least as often as women (cf. table p. 198). Thus though witchcraft is held to be hereditary, and is particularly associated with menstrual blood, it is individual behaviour, not birth, or sex, that determines accusations.

754 What sort of behaviour, then, leads to accusations of witchcraft, and what sort of behaviour is thought to provoke attack by a witch, or bring upon one the chilling breath of men? We found that some quite specific teaching was given to Nyakyusa children on this point.

754 The type most usually described as a witch is the person whose
626 character makes him (or her) to some extent isolated and unpopular—a proud man who treats his neighbours with disdain; a retiring man who always keeps silent in public; a glum wife, or one who fails to greet the other woman she meets and to inquire after their children. Such people are treated by their neighbours with less courtesy and hospitality than the traditional ideals of good manners demand. 'Perhaps we do not summon him to drink beer, or to eat with us; and then when our cows fail to give milk we think, "doubtless it is he who is throttling them".'

One who fails to show sympathy with a neighbour in bereavement, neglecting to attend a funeral in the village, or one who does not try to persuade a neighbour to remain, when that neighbour is preparing to move for fear of witchcraft, is immediately suspect. The chief characteristic of witches is always said to be pride (*emwanga*), which includes a cold aloofness, as well as boastfulness and irascibility.

And what sort of people are thought to be attacked by witches? Informants agree that, though they act without public support, witches seldom act without provocation. It is argued on the one hand that they act from greed, and on the other that suppressed hatred drives them to attack (*vide supra*, pp. 92-4 and table, pp. 198-201). The Nyakyusa see no contradiction in this, for they

believe that the witches, lusting after food, choose as victims those against whom they have a grudge. The exception is the witch who, having eaten with his fellow witches, fails to provide a victim in his turn and is compelled to offer a kinsman of his own. Mwamunda, talking of witchcraft between relatives, explained: 'Thrustling of relatives is of two kinds: firstly, when kinsmen quarrel over something, perhaps cattle, and one throttles the child of his relative; secondly, when there is no quarrel, but a witch has gone with his fellow witches to eat of their food in his dreams, then they come to him and say: "You have eaten our food with us, give us your food. If you don't we shall eat your wife." Then he points out the child of his kinsman to them' (*vide infra*, p. 114). Far more often, however, the witches' attack is attributed to a quarrel, or to envy roused by conspicuous success. Men are said to excite the envy of witches by acquiring many cattle, hoeing a much larger garden than others, earning more at work, or by boasting about the importance of the position they hold in government or other employment. A woman excites envy by becoming the favourite wife of her husband, or by carrying a heavier load than her fellows when she goes with them to fetch firewood (*cf.* Document, p. 129). Our friends constantly referred to the danger of rousing envy; it is in fact believed to be the motive behind witchcraft in a large proportion of cases.

Good food rouses the envy of witches also, and the man who eats alone is felt to be in danger, but not only from the witches. It is said: 'If you have grudged your neighbours meat . . . those who watch over the village by night, "the defenders", will be angry, and call the witches to help; they will eat you.' Here we come to the legitimate use of python power, 'the breath of men'. Greed at a feast; failure to share whatever meat, or beer, or other fine food one has, whether it be prepared in the village, or brought as a gift from affines; failure to send the customary cut of an animal killed as a gift to the chief; and failure to provide a feast on certain occasions, are all regarded as sins liable to bring on the wrong-doer the 'curse' or 'breath' of his aggrieved neighbours. The feasts specially mentioned as being necessary are those at death and at marriage (*vide supra*, p. 70, and Document, p. 106). As Mwakwilebeja, an old commoner, put it: 'If I did not kill at a funeral, the neighbours, those who eat the meat, would be angry. As they scattered from the funeral they would say: "He is

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626 hard, he has not killed a cow for the death of his child." When they go round telling other people like this, they bring down the "breath of men".

626 But it is not thought that neighbours are concerned only with enforcing hospitality within the village; they are also shocked (*bikawiriga*) by disrespectful behaviour towards parents and parents-in-law; by a wife swearing at her husband or hitting him; by incest; by a woman 'soiling' her lover, i.e. by running off with him repeatedly, and so enraging her husband that he forces him to eat filth; by a woman continuing to bear children after her son has married a girl who has reached puberty; and by any other manifestation of 'pride' (*amatingo*). Their shocked astonishment is held to bring on the wrong-doer their chilling 'breath' which causes sterility, paralysis, or some other lingering illness, or makes the child of a woman who has insulted her mother-in-law, or peeped at her father-in-law, thin and sickly.

"If a woman should look at her father-in-law on purpose her friends shout at her and say: "You are proud (*amatingo*) you look on your father-in-law." Then she won't get children or her child falls ill. It is true also that if she says the name or looks on a father-in-law she will have difficulty when she comes to die. . . . She might die slowly and in pain or she might be old and weary and wish to die, and not be able to do so. . . . It is "the breath of men" that causes her child to be ill. If the father-in-law on whom she looked said nothing about it nothing would happen, but if he told his friends then the woman's child would be made ill by "the breath of men"—the child the woman was carrying when she saw the man, or her first-born child, would suffer' (cf. Document, p. 236).

Another informant said: 'Suppose that a man dies leaving a young son, and his brother, the heir, refuses to give this boy a cow for milk or, later, cows for marriage, then the dead man comes in a dream to the heir and reproaches him. Then he, the heir, fetches his wife and tells her: "We must give him (the ward) a cow, my brother came to me by night and reproached me," and so he will give the boy a cow. If he still refuses to do so, his fellows in the village, fellows of his elder brother (the heir having taken over the elder brother's homestead) will pass judgement on him and there will be much "breath". And if he refuses to provide marriage-cattle for his brother's son and provides them

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753 children, are not uncommon; that the penalty of sin is believed often to be delayed, and an illness may be attributed to a wrong committed many years previously; and lastly, that the victim of retribution may be one of several individuals. Parents are thought to be punished by the sickness of their children as well as in their own persons; in a case of sexual transgression it may be either partner who suffers; in the case of a neglected death ritual it may be either the heir or the widow on whose behalf it should have been performed (cf. Document, pp. 206, 236-7). When a woman bears a child after her son is married to a girl who has reached puberty, it is thought that she may fall ill herself, or her husband may be cursed 'because he had agreed to his son marrying a grown girl before the son's mother had grown old'; or the son may have no children because he eloped with his wife, or has 'married a grown girl when his father had only agreed that he should be betrothed to a little girl'.

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869 A lively fear of witchcraft and of the 'breath of men' is inculcated in Nyakyusa children when quite young; Mwaikambo, a Christian, explained that boys learn about witchcraft from their senior play-mates when they are out herding, and in the hut at night in the boys' village, when tales are told. 'Then one fears in one's stomach and thinks: "Father! perhaps I, also, will be eaten by witches."' Ambilikile, another Christian informant, confirmed this, saying: 'We learn about witches from comments on cases of sickness, and from tales. When someone has died people say: "He was a witch, we found a python." Or perhaps of another it is said that "the witches had eaten him". In these tales the witches are said to have eaten people, or speared them, by means of witchcraft, so that the victim dies. We are also told how the witches fight in the power of witchcraft with their fellows from other villages, and how they fly on their pythons. What we hear always makes witchcraft awe-inspiring. I feared it very much.'

We had ample evidence that for most Nyakyusa the fear of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men' continues throughout life, and that it directly affects behaviour. It is, perhaps, the main sanction for moral behaviour within the village.

c. *Procedure in witchcraft cases*

Whenever someone is very ill there is anxious speculation among relatives and neighbours as to the cause of the illness. If witchcraft is suspected—and witchcraft is thought to be by far the commonest cause of sickness and death—people begin to whisper (*ukuheha*) that so and so is responsible. Even if the trouble is only a sudden fall in the milk supply there are whispers about witchcraft and the identity of the witch. Then the neighbours meet and complain (*ukwijaja*), or else the leader of the village-section, or even the headman of the village, takes the initiative and, summoning his people, admonishes them. The object of such complaint and exhortation is to warn off the witch. 'People speak very angrily, then the witches are ashamed within themselves, and stop their witchcraft, because they die of shame.' If the warning is effective—that is if the patient or the cows recover—the case will be dropped; but if the trouble continues then the village proceeds to the discovery of the witch. Mwaismo explained: 'If sickness occurs, the village headman will call his people round him and say: "This village is not right, disease is killing the people, there must be someone who is bewitching them. We warn him to stop!" Then, if he does not stop he will call the people round him again and say: "Well, we must drive him away." Then they discuss their dreams with the headman, it is always by their dreams that they find out the witch, no other way.' A case was quoted in which the milk yield of a village had diminished and the villagers had 'called one another' to come together to complain. While they were complaining a 'defender' called out: 'I have seen the one who is throttling the cows; come together again to-morrow, and no one must stay behind.' When they met the next day one man called the names of each villager in turn, and 'the defender' responded to each with 'Yes', until 'Mwasalutaba' was called. Then he was silent. The name was called three times, and at the third time the whole company groaned. Mwasalutaba got up and, denying the accusation, appealed to the ordeal. He was found guilty by it and was driven from the village (cf. Document, pp. 241-3).

Mwakwelebeja, himself a commoner credited with the power of discovering witches in dreams, made a revealing comment on

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791 the discovery of witches. He said: 'The witches betray them-
754 selves. When we are sitting discussing the witches throttling
people, we may notice one looking nervous and glancing side-
long at his friends, then we, who are innocent, know that he is the
man.' Certainly a suspect is closely watched, and if he shows
anxiety, or fails to join in the condemnation of witches and the
expression of good will, this is brought up against him, as the
following case shows.

754 'A certain man called Mwakagugu had a guest staying with him;
627 a soldier on leave. Now this soldier was in the habit of calling in
the neighbours to eat when his wife cooked a meal, and M. was
always angry in his heart, wishing to eat alone with his guest.
When the soldier invited in other people M. would refuse to
join them. (The soldier was correct, according to Nyakyusa
custom, in what he did. It is good to call in friends to eat.) On
one occasion the soldier bought some beer and a crowd of men
were drinking it, in another house, not M.'s; but they took a dry
bamboo from M.'s place as firewood, to heat the water for the
beer. Then M. was very angry indeed and asked: "What do you
mean by taking my bamboo?" And his neighbours silently criti-
cized him, thinking "Our friend here has not even bought this
beer, and then he gets angry when we take his bamboo!" Another
day when the soldier killed a bullock and gave a leg of the meat
to some guests of his who were present his child fell ill, its ear
swelled up and burst, and it screamed with pain. Later, a neigh-
bour's wife cooked some porridge for her husband without any
relish so when she brought the porridge to where the men were
sitting, the soldier called to his own wife to bring a chicken she
had cooked, as relish, and he offered it to the other men, eating
none himself. Again, on yet another occasion, when his wife
brought him his porridge she called M. to join him; but M.
laughed and said: "Let them (the soldier and his other friends),
eat it by themselves." This was the woman's story. And then
straight away they were startled by the child screaming and
refusing to lie down.

'So then all the neighbours gathered together and gave expres-
sion to their anger (*ukwijaja*), asking themselves the cause of the
sickness, and why it was that it always became apparent when
they were eating. "If the man in question" they said, naming no
one, "does it again, we will expel him from the country!" As

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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soon as this was over M. at once began to whisper to a friend: "Why do they ask about this sickness, and all the other sicknesses we have they say nothing about? When we are ill is that not an illness?" His friend answered: "It is taboo to speak like this, they will hear you!" And when M. went on whispering he said: "Get out of my house." When the others heard of this they drove M. away, saying that it was he who was making the child sick. And that night the child's illness reached its height, and was worse than ever before.

(In reply to question): 'At first when they met to express their anger they knew it was M. but feared to accuse him openly. When, however, he began to whisper they feared no longer and said openly: "You are a witch!" The headmen have forbidden all private whispering about witchcraft, as distinct from a formal public gathering to express anger; so that when his friend said to M.: "It is forbidden to speak like this", this was what he referred to. What he meant was: "Why did you not say this openly if it pains your heart? Now you seem to be making the illness worse!" In other words, the object of the open expression of anger was to warn M. off, but by continuing to whisper himself he showed that he had not repented. He was still angry. If he had said nothing they would not have expelled him.

'After M.'s neighbours had driven him from his home (by word of mouth only) he moved, but the village headman, Mwambuputa, brought him back to a different part of his village, not to the section of it (*akapanga*) where M. had previously built; he put him in the house of one of his men. Then his neighbours grew angry asking why Mwambuputa, who himself had forbidden murmuring, had brought back one whom they had convicted of witchcraft! So they went to Mwambuputa's place and expressed their anger to him. Then he agreed to go and expel him. I who recount the case, went with them.

'When we reached the house where M. was staying the assistant headman of M.'s old section, Mwakyandwike, stood out and said: "I have a word to say to my father Mwambuputa. I am astonished that you received back M. after I had driven him away because he is an evil man who does not like to have friendly dealings with us his neighbours." Then Mwambuputa replied: "When I fetched him back I did not know you had convicted him of witchcraft, I thought he was simply moving." "Yes,"

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627 replied the other, "that is why I have followed him, for your house is my home! If you love M. you too will be expelled!" And the others said: "Had you known about the case, we should have expelled you both!" "Let us tell him then", said Mwambuputa. But M. was not in the house and had to be fetched. When he came Mwambuputa said: "Your neighbours have followed you saying that they have expelled you. You have done some evil, have you not? I, when I received you, did not know of this, I thought you were just moving." "What is their reason for driving me away?" asked M. "That I've not yet asked them, we will ask them together." Then one man said: "You M., when you moved, why did you move?" M.: "The reason was this, our child (*sic*) at home was sick and we met to express our anger; after this I said to a friend, 'Why do they express their anger and say some one of us has eaten the child for there is a great deal of fever about and many children are sick?' This I said, and then found my friends said I was the witch. 'We expel you' they said, so I moved." "Yes," they said, "you knew yourself to be a witch, why else did you not show indignation and surprise and take your friends to Mwambuputa to be tried? Now you've given them power, and they have followed you here!" Another said: "If your friends drive you from the village will you be obstinate?" Then Mwambuputa said: "No more words, leave the village, your fellows tell you to go!"

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783 M. condemned himself in the eyes of his neighbours by suggesting that their hinted accusation was false, after they had gathered to express indignation; and here we come to one of the essential points in the Nyakyusa concept of witchcraft. A witch may repent; if he does repent he is no longer a danger to the village, but an asset, since as a witch he has the power to defend the village as well as to attack; and *admission of guilt is taken as a sign of repentance*. The Nyakyusa hold that a witch is always conscious of his evil activity and they have no ritual expressions of good will such as the Zande blowing on chicken wings, but they stress the obligation of a suspect to admit guilt, either directly or by implication. It is said that in the past, if a suspect admitted guilt, he was not driven out. Very few people, however, do admit guilt; the only case we traced was that of a labourer on the Lupa gold-fields who was accused by his fellows of harming the eyes of one of the gang, who had just discovered a large

nugget of gold. This 'witch' was actually expelled from the camp by his fellows, but Nyakyusa, commenting on the case, remarked that had it occurred in one of the home villages, he would only have been fined. 754 783

Sometimes a case begins with the startling shout of 'a defender' in the night, who claims to have seen in his dreams that a witch is attacking either himself or a fellow villager. 'A man who dreams of fighting, or being beaten, will sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and go out of his house and shout: "You, so and so, why do you come and fight with me?" But often he will not mention the name then, but waits till the morning when his friends will come and ask him: "Why were you shouting last night?" Then he tells them the name of the man he dreamed of, and if another man dreams of him in the same way the next night or later, then they say he is a witch.' Such a case was described by Mwaikambo: 'A certain man, Kololo, dreamed of his fellow, and in the morning he called out on the road, "I dreamed of so and so, we fought with him in the night, he was throttling me." So his fellows came to his help and said to the accused man: "You, Moses, we have caught you, move elsewhere!" So Moses [who was a pagan, despite his name] moved to another village in the same chiefdom, that of Korosso.' 754 787

Occasionally a witch reveals himself by threatening a neighbour with whom he has quarrelled, using the stereotyped phrases: 'You may sleep or you may not' (*Uligona*), or 'What are you?' (*Uligwaki*), or 'Something may happen!' Here is an actual case as reported to us: 'Mwantibe once ordered a boy, the son of a village neighbour, to go on a message for him, but the boy refused, though it is customary for men to send their neighbours' sons on messages. Then Mwantibe got angry with him and snatched his cloth away, saying in anger: "You, boy, something may happen!" implying that the boy would fall ill. The boy fell ill that very evening, and died shortly afterwards. Mwantibe hurried to return the cloth, but the boy's people drove him away with it saying: "What sort of sorrow have you? Are you pretending, so that we shall not suspect you?" For they said it was he who had "eaten" the boy.' 754

The cases quoted so far all involve a direct accusation of witchcraft against the suspect, but sometimes he is compelled to move without ever being accused face to face. Mwaisumo ex- 754 627

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plained: 'The men of the village cut a banana stem and wrap banana leaves round it, and go at night and put it in front of his door; they also pull some of the thatching off the roof and put it with the banana stem. They do this without ever accusing him to his face of being a witch. Then, in the morning, when others pass by, they notice and say to each other: "See, he has been caught, he is a witch!" In the fields men will call out to one another, saying: "Have you heard? So and so has been caught as a witch?" They will call out where he can hear them, and he cannot stand it. He will go away to another chief.'

Instead of using a banana stem his neighbours may barricade his doorway with thorns while he is out. 'This symbolizes', Mwaikambo said, 'that we (your neighbours) wish to spear you; because, if you try to pass, the thorns will spear you. But we have left you, get out!' Or, as another informant explained: 'The thorns are the hearts of men, symbolizing that the men are all angry.' Occasionally, it is said, a brave man will clear away the thorns and remain, but his neighbours whisper about it and later on they will barricade his doorway again, and he will move. Placing the banana stem, or the thorns, is a joint action by the neighbours—should an individual do it on his own his neighbours will bring a charge against him. One informant suggested that the procedure is a new one developed to avoid making a direct accusation of witchcraft, which is a punishable offence under European administration; but this is doubtful.

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The following case illustrates not only the practice of barricading the doorway of a supposed witch, but also the responsibility of headmen for the defence of the village, together with the belief that a witch may throttle his own child. 'Nsekela was an assistant headman in the village of Mwambuputa, appointed by Mwambuputa himself. Nsekela's child cried by night and Mwambuputa was angry with him because he did not report the matter. "Why did you not tell me that your child was ill here? Why do you hide it? Indeed you are bad, it is you who are making the child ill, get out of our country!" Nsekela watched over a village-section, he was Mwambuputa's assistant, therefore it was that Mwambuputa said: "Why do you hide the fact that your child is ill here, you my assistant? Indeed you have bewitched it yourself." Nsekela denied the charge saying: "It is not I. No!" Then he went away to Selika about a case. While he was away his neighbours

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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barricaded his doorway with thorns. On his return he found them, and he moved to Mwaihojo's country (the adjoining chiefdom). 627 754 ●

Often an accusation of witchcraft is made without resort to divination at all: the behaviour of the accused (as in the cases quoted on pp. 110-13) or the word of 'the defender', is taken as evidence. But if there is doubt as to the identity of the witch, the patient or his family may consult a diviner (*undagusi*),¹ putting before him the names of persons they suspect. Whatever the grounds of accusation, however, it was normally confirmed by the *umwafi* ordeal, if the accused did not admit guilt. The chief might order a suspect to go to the ordeal, or a man or woman accused by his neighbours would appeal to the ordeal, when denying the charge. In such a case the accuser and accused first went to the chief to report and get official witnesses, then, accompanied by these witnesses and other friends, they went to a doctor who had a store of a certain medicine, *umwafi*, and there, at his homestead, they drank the *umwafi* together. Those who failed to vomit were judged guilty. The procedure was described by a number of witnesses (*vide* Documents, pp. 241-6). The accuser and the accused, each accompanied by supporters, go to the doctor, who warns them not to drink if what they have said is false. The doctor sprinkles powder into tepid water and gives the accuser and the accused the infusion to drink. He addresses the *umwafi*, and the supporters address each their own friend. Then, when one vomits his (or her) supporters applaud trilling, and they go home, the man who vomited paying the doctor. Mwandesi described how after one of the two had vomited the other would sit tense and miserable, quite still. He would be left alone awhile, but later the doctor would try to make him bring up the poison: 'Should a man die?' they said. Only rarely, it seems, did anyone die of drinking *umwafi*. 787 754 627 695 [201]

If the accuser failed to vomit he was judged guilty of witchcraft himself; if neither vomited both were judged guilty; if both vomited the accuser was fined, paying two or more cows to the accused in compensation for slander. If he had no cows he might give a girl in marriage. 754 627 695

¹ For the methods of divination see Godfrey Wilson 'An African Morality', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936), p. 80.

² A high-pitched *uh-uh-uh* expressing praise and triumph.

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695 Sometimes the individuals concerned did not actually take the ordeal themselves, but each was represented by one of his or her children, as when Mwaisumo's mother was accused of bewitching the village cows, and one of her younger sons drank the *umwafi* representing her (cf. Document, p. 241). Very often the ordeal was used to discover which *group* was responsible for the trouble, whether it was the father's people or the mother's, or perhaps the village, and a child was chosen to represent each group and given the poison. Mwaisumo himself had drunk *umwafi* as a child, representing his father's people (cf. Document, p. 244). And a sceptic explained that each family chose a member who vomited readily—his family was always represented by a certain daughter who vomited *umwafi* immediately.

The ordeal is only administered nowadays in the greatest secrecy, and probably very rarely, for informants who had no hesitation in discussing with us witchcraft accusations and trials of supposed witches, though these were well known to be illegal, denied that the ordeal was administered. The most recent example we traced occurred in 1932.

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754 So far we have only dealt with cases in which witchcraft is suspected as the cause of illness among men, or of a decrease in the milk supply. The matter is more serious if someone has actually died. If there is any doubt as to the cause of death, an autopsy is performed, and a diagnosis made from the condition of the stomach and intestines. 'Wounds' or scars in the stomach are taken as evidence of attacks by witches, and a black oily substance in the bowel, or red streaked with black and white, is a mark of sorcery; if the bowel is swollen, or if the entrails burst out of the incision, it is proof that the deceased was himself a witch, and was probably killed in a quarrel with fellow witches. Death due to a relative having been bound with ropes (cf. Document, p. 249), or a disease of the bowels (*ikitasya*) attributed to natural causes, is also thought to be apparent at an autopsy. Some maintain too, that the source of witchcraft can be discovered from the examination, wounds on the right side of the stomach indicating that the witch is a member of the father's family, or of the age-village; wounds on the left indicating that he is a member of the mother's family (cf. Document p. 246).

At the autopsy the crowd is kept at a distance and usually only one or two senior relatives or neighbours, the headman of the

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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village, and the doctor who operates are present. Occasionally their judgement is challenged. 787

'Once an old pagan woman, whose husband was reputed to have been a witch, demanded an autopsy. When they opened the stomach the entrails (*elitondobeli*) jumped out. [When the entrails jump out this way they say "the python is fighting".] The observers looked, and said to the doctor, "All right, all right, bind him up again!" But the widow objected, saying, "No, come near all of you." She called all the people and went to the corpse, and tore open the stomach. All cried out, saying: "Alas! do not do that. It is forbidden." Then she turned to the old people and said: "Is there anything here? Nothing! He is only a witch by hearsay. Yes, indeed, just because the entrails jumped out you convicted him." For detailed accounts of two of the autopsies observed see the Document on pp. 247-50. 754

In the past the source of witchcraft was always confirmed through the ordeal; nowadays divination with the rubbing-board is sometimes used instead. Mwamunda described the procedure: 787
"The custom of drinking *wwwafi* has ceased, but some, when a person has died, perhaps a child, make an autopsy. . . . Then, if they find wounds of witchcraft (*efilonda efya manga*) the father and the mother of the child go to a doctor to divine, but they do not drink *wwwafi*, they divine with the rubbing-board. Perhaps the divination indicates the mother. She then goes to her father, and he goes to divine with his wife, the grandmother of the dead child. If he (the grandfather) is then indicated he next takes his kinsmen with him, and when the divination indicates one of them the man will say: "This divination is nonsense; it always deceives." But others will think him guilty and say: "A kinsman was caught, he had eaten his grandchild." Or perhaps the divination indicates the father of the dead child. If so he divines again asking: "Is it relatives, or is it the country?" (For a man has a country, not a woman.) Then perhaps the divination will show that it is not relatives, but the "breath of God" (*Kyala*), that is to say other people, non-relatives. Or perhaps the divination indicates the father of the dead child and his relatives; and if so the father goes with his kinsmen and one of them is indicated. Then the father goes again with the man indicated by the previous divination, to confirm the verdict. Before going to court he asks himself: "How shall I bring a case which depends for evidence on divination? 754

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754 Will the Europeans allow it?" And so (instead of bringing a charge of witchcraft) he sues his kinsman for a shilling. Later he sues him for a cow, and some even get a court order to collect the cow. Another man in such a position may claim a legal separation from his kinsman and their reciprocal debts in cattle are repaid.¹ It's a case indeed, that!

Mwamunda came from Rungwe, not far from the administrative centre, Tukuyu, hence perhaps his hesitation in preferring a charge of witchcraft; in more remote parts cases concerning witchcraft are taken to the courts. Nsusa explained: "We judge cases concerning witchcraft openly, but we do not have them written in the court book. When "a defender" has seen his fellow throttling someone he tells us, and we judge that witch. It is "the defenders" who see the witches. Perhaps "the defender" comes out of his house by night and calls out: "I see so and so throttling so and so! Listen to-morrow!" Yes, that happens nowadays. When someone tells us this we agree, the witch is convicted, even though he denies it. We say: "You are a witch, a thief, even though you do not admit it, get out of the country." Formerly when the accused denied he was a witch they went to the ordeal, and the ordeal caught the witch; now, since the Europeans have forbidden the use of *umwafi*, we accept the word of "the defenders". For you know the defenders *see* the witches! In dreams! "What about the man who accused the wife of Mwakobela?" we asked. "He denied it; he said: "I did not see her". So on that account we said: "Since you have slandered her you must pay thirty shillings." If he had really seen her and told us properly we should have decided against the woman and divorced her from her husband, but he denied it, saying: "I did not see her", and we all said: "The woman is not a witch, who has seen her?" And if a man is fined because he has accused his fellow of witchcraft without seeing him really, we do not write that in the book either."

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683 Formerly, when a man was convicted of witchcraft, and did not admit it, he was compelled to move from his village, and often to leave the chiefdom altogether. Often his cattle and crops were taken by the chief, who killed one or more for 'the innocent' to eat. No compensation was paid to relatives as in an ordinary

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Nyakyusa Kinship in African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

homicide. 'Was he speared by day?' say the Nyakyusa. On the other hand, if relatives themselves brought the accusation, the chief could not take the accused's property. Since kinsmen themselves were driving the man out, whose property should the chief take? Everything went to the kinsmen, save one cow, which they gave the man they were driving out, that he might start a herd in his new home. A wife convicted of witchcraft was commonly divorced, being sent back to her father, who had then to return the marriage-cattle given for her. Rarely was a supposed witch killed. 754 613

As we have seen, supposed witches are still often banished if men, or divorced if women, but property is no longer seized, the practice having been effectively stopped by the British Administration. There is considerable variation in the actual treatment of supposed witches at the present time. Some husbands do not divorce their wives when they are convicted of witchcraft, others do so immediately; some chiefs drive supposed witches out of their country, and others allow them to settle in another village of the chiefdom. We have no evidence that those who are supposed to have killed others by witchcraft are usually treated more severely than those whose crime is causing sickness or a decrease in the milk supply. The punishment seems to vary, and to have varied formerly, rather with the status and personal popularity of the accused in his village, or with the affection a man has for his wife, than with the nature of the crime. [586]

Those who have been convicted of witchcraft are not ostracized. A wife divorced on account of her witchcraft commonly remarries soon after; a man driven out for witchcraft is admitted to another village. The attitude is: 'Perhaps he bewitched his fellows there, we do not know, but he has not bewitched us.' Often a man who has been driven away by neighbours is fetched back again, a year or more later. Such was the case with the village headman Mwamila, who went to his chief and said: 'People are eating your child'—one of the chief's children had a disease of the eyes which blinded him. The chief ordered his people (i.e. their representatives) to take the ordeal. Then all were angry at Mwamila for going to the chief, because he went alone to whisper about them. Had he gone with others they would have been satisfied, but to go alone was not right. The ordeal indicated Mwamila himself, and the chief took all his four 754

754 cows. No, they did not take his food and mats, was he not a village headman? He moved; but, after one year only, they went to fetch him back.'

Here, in the accusation against a village headman, who, by virtue of his office has the power of defence and of bringing 'the breath' on wrong-doers, we come to the root of the ambivalence towards those accused of witchcraft. Witches are dangerous, but the very power which makes them dangerous also makes them valuable as 'defenders', for no distinction between the power of attack and defence is consistently maintained. The essential difference lies in the use of the power. Hence, Mwaisomo declared, people actually like it when a man who has admitted witchcraft builds among them. 'They say he has the power of defence, and they think that a man who has once admitted witchcraft will not throttle them.' A parallel attitude towards homicides and cattle-thieves existed in the traditional culture, when chiefs were sometimes urged to rescue a homicide from the vengeance of a dead man's kin, or a cattle-thief from enraged victims, on the grounds that one who had proved himself such a fierce warrior (by killing another) or so skillful in lifting cattle, was too useful in war to be lost to the chiefdom.

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683 Nevertheless, if a person who has once been accused of witchcraft makes himself (or herself) unpopular again, the old case is raked up against him or her, and there are men who have been driven from one chiefdom to another, each time accused by their neighbours, and wives who have been divorced for witchcraft by one husband after another. This is the terrible fate held up before 'proud' children.

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512 And what of the slur on the family when a member is convicted of witchcraft? We have seen that witchcraft is considered hereditary in all but a few exceptional cases, and the stock reaction to an accusation is: 'We are astounded! No one in our family has ever been convicted of witchcraft!' In practice, parents are loath to allow a son or daughter to marry into a family in which either parent has a reputation of witchcraft; two or three cases were cited in which parents had opposed a marriage for this reason (c.f. Document, p. 252). But such arguments are private within the family, and the family feared by one group of neighbours need not be considered dangerous by people from another village. Since practically every adult marries at least once, the

objection to marrying the child of one who has been convicted is clearly not pushed to its logical conclusion. No star is cast on any one lineage when an individual is convicted of witchcraft, for he may have inherited it from either parent, or even got it from a friend; conversely no lineage is cleared by an autopsy, for not all the children of a witch are necessarily witches. Thus a man may have a father or brother or son who is 'pure', yet be a witch himself. As we have seen, even persons belonging to the same lineage may occasionally accuse each other. Nevertheless, when an individual who is reputed to be a witch dies, the close relatives do sometimes insist on an autopsy, in order to clear the deceased of suspicion, and possibly themselves also (*vide supra*, p. 117). In one case we recorded it was a daughter who insisted on the autopsy being performed on her mother, a reputed witch. No witchcraft was found.

So far we have dealt with cases of misfortune befalling an individual, followed by action against a fellow villager who is suspected of being responsible. This type of case is far the commonest within the field of witchcraft. When a general misfortune, such as a plague or epidemic, threatens, the chiefdom acts as a whole, not the villages separately, and the ritual is directed primarily to securing the blessing of the shades. There is some suggestion of ridding the chiefdom of witchcraft at the same time, but the emphasis is on appeasing the ancestors. The traditional new year cleansing (*akatsy' shikungu*), now rarely performed, was also the concern of chiefdoms not separate villages, and it involved prayer to the ancestors.

A. The age-village and the ancestors

We have dwelt at length on witchcraft and 'the breath of man', for, in Nyakyusa belief, the defence of the village against witches and the punishment of wrong-doers by 'the breath' of their fellows is the main corporate activity of the village in the religious sphere. There are no village rituals directed to the ancestors comparable to those performed on behalf of lineages and chiefdoms. Indeed, belief in the power of shades operates only in situations where social position is determined by descent, as it is in lineages and in the succession to chieftainship. The office of village headman is not hereditary. The son of a village headman

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622 cannot be appointed as headman in any village of his own generation, and villages of past generations disappear. When a headman dies, his village still being in existence, his place is taken by his heir who may be a son, but this office is only temporary. The village ceases to exist when its original members die off. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the shade of a headman's father broods over the village as the shade of a chief is thought to brood over the land he ruled.

715 The Nyakyusa have a lively belief in the power of shades, a belief closely connected with the dependence of the members of a lineage upon one another for cattle,¹ and with the office of 'divine king', but such belief scarcely affects village relationships, for the shades are not thought to be concerned with behaviour between neighbours, as distinct from relatives.

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602 It is true that the proper performance of family rituals includes feasting neighbours, but the implication always is that the shades are concerned only in enforcing obligations towards themselves and fellow kinsmen, not towards non-relatives. On the other hand, neighbours are concerned in the enforcement of kinship obligations. When a son insults his father, the father's neighbours are insulted also; when a daughter-in-law peeps at her father-in-law the shocked astonishment of the neighbours may cause her children to pine. And so, when an erring son begs pardon of his father, he must provide a feast for the neighbours, 'that they may see that his father is satisfied'.

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754 A situation often arises in which both the shades and 'the breath of men' operate, sometimes 'the breath' of shocked neighbours supporting the shades, and sometimes shades and men each exacting their due. One illustration of this was given us by Kalunda: 'If you do not carry out the burial rites for your father, people are angry, they throttle you, and the shade is angry also, he comes on your body. No, the witches do not call the ancestors to help; both are angry on their own account. To-day the black ones, the winches, come and throttle you; to-morrow the ancestors come. People are angry because they do not eat meat; the shade is angry because you did not perform the burial rites for him. He says: "See, I left much property, why did you not bury me properly?"' And in discussing the obligation of a daughter-in-

¹ cf. Geoffrey Wilson, 'An African Manley', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936); Monica Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

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law to avoid her father-in-law, another informant said: 'It is forbidden to look at fathers-in-law. If we do look then we shall not die well, we shall long to die and not be able to do so, because both those below (the dead) and those above (the living) are angry. Yes, it is the witches we mean when we say "those above".'

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c. *The age-village and medicines*

Unlike the belief in witchcraft and 'the breath of men', which mainly affects relationships within a village, or the ancestor cult which is confined to the relations between kinsmen, and between chief and people, the use of medicines (*imikoto*)¹ enters into every type of relationship in Nyakyusa society. Medicines are employed to win success in almost every undertaking: cultivating, herding, hunting, love-making, war. They are regarded as one of the main props of authority; the impressiveness (*abwitya*) of a chief, and the power of a village headman to command, being directly related to the medicines with which they are treated (*vide supra*, pp. 24-5). They are resorted to for the promotion of fertility, for the treatment of the sick, and for protection and retaliation generally, as well as the means of directly harming an enemy. Medicines are believed to operate along with other mystical powers. For example, they are an essential element in rituals directed to the ancestors, and they are used for the discovery of witchcraft (in the ordeal) as well as for protection against it, and for the treatment of patients thought to have been 'exten' by the witches or chilled by 'the breath of men'. Used alone, medicines are held to be ineffective against witchcraft or 'the breath of men', but they are regarded as a useful complement to other actions, such as the banishment of the witch or the repentance of the sinner.

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The power of witchcraft or of defence against witches (*amanga*) is connected with medicines, for it is thought often to be acquired for defensive purposes (and more rarely for aggressive purposes) through drinking medicines (*vide pp. 25, 221*). But the powers of witchcraft, or witch defence, and of medicines are quite distinct; the one implies a peculiar physical condition, the presence of one or more pythons in the belly, whereas the other may be bought from a doctor and used by anyone, and its

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¹ The root *-koto* implies something derived from a plant, cf. *iki-koto*, a wooden stool.

- 754 efficiency neither depends upon nor affects the user's anatomy.
757 The creation and control of wild animals, for example, is thought
789 to turn on knowing the right medicines, not on any innate power, and is not therefore classed as witchcraft.

791 The Nyakyusa hold that just as 'python power' may be put to
754 good or evil use, so also medicines may be employed legally or
789 illegally. Particular techniques are not in themselves either good or bad; their morality turns on the purpose which they serve. Thus our friend and neighbour, Mwakondo, who was believed to have created four lions, which were roaming the neighbourhood, by placing certain bundles of twigs in the long grass, was regarded as a benefactor; for the lions had attacked neither men nor cattle, and besides adding dignity (*abwiza*) to the country were killing the wild pig, which had been destroying the gardens. But a certain X— was driven out of Mwakondo's country because he was alleged to have created leopards which had killed children and cows. In 1926 X— was notorious for making leopards. It was said that he got a medicine from Misenko to make them. His neighbours feared to quarrel with him for in that year leopards infested the whole of Selya, especially the country of Mwakondo. It was said that if one quarrelled with this man one's child would be killed by leopards the following day. He was notorious. Once he quarrelled with a neighbour, saying: "Your cattle are eating my food." Then the following day the child of that man was taken by a leopard. The chief drove X— out. When they questioned him he denied having familiars ("animals") but the chief said: "Move from my country, for your animals are destroying this country." He said: "Chief, give me the ordeal." The chief refused, saying: "Not get out of my country." So he moved, row on a rock in the country of Mwakondo. He returned to the place from which he had moved.¹

789 Not all medicines believed to cause sickness and death are illegal; there are many retaliatory medicines which are believed only to harm the evil-doer, e.g. the thief, the adulterer, or the eater of stolen food; and the use of these 'medicines of ownership' (*ijilwoko*) is considered quite legitimate. A man gives his wives medicines to drink (without their knowledge) and then any lover who may sleep with them will, it is said, contract disease in

¹ In another account this man was spoken of as a witch (*indidi*), cf. Deacon, p. 292.

consequence, though the wives themselves are free. Further the adulterer will pass the disease on to any women he subsequently sleeps with, including his own wives. Gonorrhea is one of the diseases attributed to this type of medicine. Medicines are also put on houses or fields, for the purpose of bringing upon thieves, or eaters of stolen food, the itch, swollen genitals, dislocation of the knee-cap and thigh, and other ills. One doctor proudly told me of a medicine he possessed which would prevent a thief leaving the field in which he was stealing 'and make him go round and round till daylight, when he is discovered and admits his theft'. Certain protective medicines are thought to cause sorcery to recoil on the sender. But their use is legal; so also is the use of a vengeance magic called 'the horns', *shapwé* (cf. Document, p. 212), and another type, *dyépe*, which is held to work only between relatives. These medicines are resorted to when one party to a dispute is dissatisfied with the judgement given in court, and occasionally in cases which have never been taken to court. They are held to harm the person against whom they are directed only if he be guilty. If he is innocent, they recoil on the user. What is illegal is the direct use of medicines to harm an enemy, without any safeguard to ensure that the medicine should only harm the guilty. This is *shapwé*, 'the snoring of men', which we translate here as sorcery.¹ The common techniques of sorcery are said to be putting medicine in an enemy's path, pricking it into his footprints, or putting it into his food and drink.

In theory the distinction between the legal and illegal use of destructive medicines is clear, but the classification of a particular case depends upon the standpoint of the informant. Just as the supposed victims of 'the breath of men' referred angrily to the attacks of 'witches', so informants whose families were alleged to have suffered from 'the horns', referred to it as 'sorcery' (*shapwé*).

The belief in sorcery and in retaliatory magic is directly parallel to the belief in witchcraft and the 'breath of men', while the belief in protective medicines is parallel to the belief in the power of 'the defenders'. The distinction between the two sets of beliefs turns, however, not only on the difference between the manipulation of medicines, and the exercise of an innate power,

¹ In 'The African Monthly', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1931) 'sorcery' was used for all destructive magic; I now confine it to the illegal use of destructive medicines.

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779 but also on the relationships to which they apply. While witchcraft, 'the breath of men', and the power of 'the defenders' are thought to operate primarily within the village and never beyond the chiefdom, sorcery, retaliatory and protective medicines may operate beyond the village and chiefdom as well as within them. Moreover, while the whole village, led by the headman, joins in defence against witchcraft, protective and retaliatory medicines are used primarily by individuals and families. Medicines of vengeance ('the horn' and *dyape*) are directed against kinship groups—members of an aquatic lineage, their spouses, and the children of daughters; are all held to be in danger—not local groups. The next-door neighbours of a man attacked will be safe so long as they are not kinsmen or allies.

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789 The one occasion on which the village or village-section, acting as a group, uses medicines, is at the burning of rubbish heaps in the fields, before planting millet and certain other crops (*vide supra*, pp. 57-4). As we have shown, these medicines are supposed to protect the grain from witches and sorcerers, as well as to increase the yield. The Koko argues that the headman who lit the medicated fire must also be the first to taste the food grown on the fields, and he takes it with medicines, but this is not insisted upon by all the Nyakyusa; most commonly it is family groups that are careful to eat protective medicines with the first-fruits from their fields.

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789 Envy is what makes men take to sorcery, the Nyakyusa say, envy of another's riches, or power, or employment. As we have seen, envy is cited as a motive for witchcraft also. But it is not the sole motive. Greed is the primary cause (*vide supra*, p. 92). And while witchcraft can only be used to *poach off a neighbour* against a village neighbour, sorcery can be used against anyone. Like witchcraft, the effects of 'the breath of men' are said to be confined to the village. Moreover 'the breath' can only operate against a known sinner—it is the murmuring of neighbours about an individual which causes him to sicken; whereas most retaliatory medicines work against unknown persons, discovering the thief, adulterer, or sorcerer, as well as punishing him. As elsewhere in Africa, the use of sorcery and retaliatory medicines is said to be almost entirely confined to men, though women are often named as witches. In short, the situations in which sorcery and medicines of retaliation are used overlap at one or two points with those in

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

187

which witchcraft and 'the breath of men' operate, but their supposed fields of action are relatively distinct.

In the past, the punishment for sorcery was death with torture by impaling, not merely confiscation of property and banishment. Proof of the practice of sorcery depended upon the evidence of the doctor who had supplied the medicine (who was not regarded as implicated in the crime) and upon the *amwasi* ordeal. The Nyakyusa insist that the practice of sorcery was formerly rare, and that it has increased enormously, much more than the practice of witchcraft. This belief is to be related to two facts. First, Nyakyusa co-operate much more than they formerly did with people who live in different villages. The clerks who work together in Government offices, and who have a fearsome reputation as *conversos*, do not necessarily live in the same village; and being apart at night when the witches fly, they cannot be supposed to bewitch one another. But there is frequent occasion for friction between them and therefore a standing temptation to employ sorcery. So also in other types of employment, in trade and on journeys, individuals are frequently in contact with men of different villages. Secondly, belief in sorcery is felt to be compatible with the acceptance of a scientific explanation of causes of disease in a way that belief in witchcraft is not. *Ulwaga* is commonly translated as 'poisoning' by those who speak English, whether the medicine is or is not put into food or drink, or whether it is supposed to affect all who eat it or only the individual against whom it is directed. All types of sorcery tend to be rationalized as 'poisoning'; and many educated Nyakyusa who deny the reality of witchcraft admit to a lively fear of *conversos*.

As the table on pp. 198-213 shows, however, accusations of witchcraft are still much more common than accusations of sorcery in the community as a whole. We heard of thirty-eight cases of supposed witchcraft to eleven of sorcery, and there was no reason to think that our friends were more likely to mention the one type of case than the other.

4. The age-village and Christianity

Since common action against witches, and to punish transgressors through 'the breath of men', is one of the primary functions of an age-village, what happens in a Christian village, or

795 when members of a pagan village embrace Christianity? Ortho-
754 dox Nyakyusa Christians, that is, those accepting the teaching of
184 the European missionaries of any of the four denominations at
work in the area, deny the reality of witchcraft and of 'the breath
of men'; they deny the power of any individual to harm another
by virtue of 'a python' in the stomach, or to bring illness to his
erring neighbour by murmuring with others about him.

As we have already seen, the profession of Christianity and school
education tend to coincide among the Nyakyusa, and the edu-
cated tend to be sceptical of witchcraft, while believing in sorcery.
Such scepticism is directly related to the dogmatic teaching of
missionaries, to instruction in physiology in schools, and to the
challenge of certain missionaries and Nyakyusa Christians that
pagans should prove the existence of witchcraft at autopsies (*vide*
Document, p. 254). The suggestion that 'pythons' are really
acute tape-worm (*vide supra* p. 92) or an enlarged kidney
is typical of the critical attitude of educated Christians to pagan
dogma. We have no doubt that belief in witchcraft is weaken-
ing, and that this weakening is directly due to mission teach-
ing.

795 Nevertheless most Christians continue to have some belief in a
754 mystical power exerted by individuals or groups to the harm of
184 others. For a few the contradiction between the traditional and
626 the Christian dogma involves acute mental conflict; for many the
conflict is resolved through the concept of 'the curse' (*ikigwa*) of
the congregation, led by the priest or pastor and elders, and
through emphasis on sorcery rather than on witchcraft. Most
Christians believe that the just wrath of those set in authority,
and of the faithful members of a congregation, may bring misfor-
tune on a sinner. They argue that the power which punishes the
wrong-doer comes from God, not from ancestors or from pythons
in men's bellies, but that it is brought upon an individual by the
anger and murmuring of men.¹ Further, it is believed that

¹ The phrase 'the breath of men' (*indaga eye kanda*) is never used with refer-
ence to the punishment of sinners in the Christian congregation, but always 'the
curse' (*ikigwa*), a word which is used to translate certain phrases in the Gospels,
and which conveys an idea felt to be compatible with Christian dogma. As
already noted (p. 101) the pagans of the plain and of Salise use 'the curse'
(*ikigwa*) more or less synonymously with 'the breath of men' (*indaga eye kanda*).
For details of cases of misfortune attributed to the curse of Christians see
Misses Hunter, 'An African Christian Ministry', *Africa*, Vol. X (1927), pp.
204-50.

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

129

Christians are only affected by the shocked astonishment of fellow Christians, not by the disapproval of pagans, and the unit within which 'the curse' is commonly spoken of as operating is the congregation. In two of the cases we recorded (vide Document, p. 209) it was suggested that illness was due to the anger of neighbours, fellow Christians, over stinginess and greed, but in the other cases it was not village neighbours who were primarily concerned, but the Christian congregation, a group embracing members from many villages.

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The type of behaviour believed to be punishable by 'the curse' of fellow Christians also differs somewhat from that thought to be punished by 'the breath of men'. The virtue Christians emphasize most is chastity, and 'the curse' is often said to be a punishment for fornication or adultery. The other sin commonly spoken of as bringing down a curse is disobedience, or disrespectful behaviour to the minister (or priest) or elder of the congregation. Among pagans 'the breath of men' serves also to sanction sexual morals and to sustain respect for those in authority, but their sex code is different. It is incest, or familiarity between father- and daughter-in-law, which they regard as really evil, not sex relations outside marriage. And they emphasize respect to senior relatives and fathers' neighbours rather than to the leaders of any wider group.

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[P35]

Christians lay much less stress on hospitality to neighbours than pagans, and it is generally agreed that they eat alone more than pagans would dare to do. As one Christian put it, a pagan would always call his neighbours to share meat or beer when he had it, but a Christian might eat a sheep, or a goat, or even a calf, alone with his family. It is good, the Christians say, to call friends to share a feast, but not an inescapable obligation. Nor do Christians regularly send the saddle and ribs of any animal they kill to the chief, as pagans do; 'for', they say, 'we do not fear "the breath of men"'. But hospitality towards strangers is felt to be a condition of salvation. One informant explained that 'If a man is stingy towards his neighbours it does not matter; but if he is stingy towards a stranger from a distance, he might die from lack of food; and that would be the fault of the stingy one. Such a fault would prevent him from entering Heaven.' This statement points to the most striking difference between Christian and pagan morality—the range of moral obligations. A pagan's duties

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623 his village headmen: In some villages the 'elder' is both a religious
795 leader and a secular authority, but there is a tendency to separate
184 the two offices and to appoint a 'peacemaker' whose duty it is to
settle disputes, collect taxes, and represent the village in its
relationships with the chief and the administration, while the
'elder' confines himself to watching over the spiritual welfare of his
people. Such division of authority is symptomatic of the growing
differentiation of Nyakyusa society.

c. Witchcraft, medicine, and the British administration

• 754 Under British administration the use of the *wawafi* ordeal, im-
putation of witchcraft, intimidation or obtaining goods under
177 false pretences by threats of witchcraft or sorcery, or offers of
627 protection against them, are punishable offences. As we have
seen, the ordeal is now administered only in the greatest secrecy,
and probably very seldom, but accusations of witchcraft are fre-
quent, and are even heard before the Native Courts, though not
recorded (*vide* Document, p. 257). In the villages near the Govern-
ment station more caution is observed in making accusations than
in more remote parts of the district: very often the identity of the
witch is only hinted at, or thorns are piled at his door by persons
who remain anonymous (*vide supra*, p. 114) so that no individual
can be convicted of imputing witchcraft. As one man put it: "The
defenders" see the witches, but cannot name them to anyone."
[763] Autopsies continue in conservative villages but they are no longer
performed on every corpse, as is said to have been customary in
the old days. The chief Furekoto, himself a sceptic, argued that
it was no use performing an autopsy when a charge could not be
laid. If the members of a village are all convinced that a particular
fellow is a witch he is forced to move, since his unpopularity
becomes insupportable to him (*supra*, pp. 110-3). As Mwambu-
puta put it: "We don't like him, and he doesn't like us either: he
does not enjoy our company (*atikungale na mune*), so he moves."
But if the friction is only between two individuals, the supposed
witch may break it out, for without resort to the *wawafi* ordeal
there is no sure means of deciding between the accuser and the
accused.

754 The prohibition of witch-finding is not accepted as right and
177 just: the common view is that the Europeans 'protect the witches',

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

133

and they are condemned for doing so. One old man argued in this way: 'Where you Europeans are wrong is in forbidding witchcraft in word only and not in spirit. It does no good to say that witchcraft does not exist; but if you had driven witchcraft out of our hearts that would have been good.' And again: ' "The defenders" still fight the witches, they make great efforts, but they may no longer speak about it. In the old days when a witch went to choke his fellow "the defenders" would see him and turn him back, and then on the morrow they would tell people that he was a witch, and he would have to go to the chief and take the ordeal which would convict him. But now "the defenders" have to be silent because of you Europeans who say there is no witchcraft, so that though the witch is perhaps turned back the first night, the next night he goes again and throttles his fellow.' Many Nyakyusa think that Europeans are hypocrites when they deny belief in witchcraft. One friend, the Christian wife of a chief, said to us: 'You are dissembling like all Europeans, you don't want to admit the reality of witchcraft. You are just dissembling.' Nor are Europeans thought to be immune from witchcraft: the attacks of malaria from which we ourselves suffered were immediately interpreted by our servants and friends as due to witches.

Since most people are sure that evil desires manifesting themselves as witchcraft or sorcery exist, movements of witch-finders partake of the nature of religious revivals. The *Machapi* movement, described by Dr. Richards for the Bemba¹ appeared among the Nyakyusa in 1932, and had a brief popularity, dying out again before 1934. The professed aim of the leader was to rid the country of witchcraft and sorcery, and the attitude of most Nyakyusa was expressed in the comment of a Christian friend who said to us: 'He (the witch-finder) did very well because he brought to light all those that killed people and made them hand over the medicines which they had used.'

The sense of insecurity created by a continuing belief in witchcraft along with the prohibition of the traditional means of discovering witches, finds expression in the frequent movement of individuals from village to village. Such movement occurred in the past, and it was often linked with suspicion of witchcraft, but whereas in the old days it was always the individual convicted in

¹ A. I. Richards, 'A Modern Movement of Witch-finders', *Africa*, Vol. VIII (1935), pp. 428-42.

166 the ~~swamp~~ ordeal who moved, now it is often the man who sup-
● 254 poses himself a victim of witchcraft who flies for his life (*vide*
infra, pp. 153 ff.); and it is probable that circulation between vill-
ages has in this way increased very considerably.

754 Denying the reality of witchcraft, the British administration
626 ignores the belief in the legitimate use of 'python power' to
673 enforce law and morality, any disputes arising out of this being
classed as 'witchcraft'. One case turning on the belief in 'the
breath of men' was heard by the District Officer of Tukuyu while
we were in the district. The facts, as given us by the District
Officer concerned, and by Nyakyusa informants, were as follows:

Mwankuga, a chief, fell sick and one of his sons-in-law, a clerk,
advised him to get treatment from the European doctor then
investigating tuberculosis in the district. When Mwankuga's
junior half-brother heard this he came to Mwankuga, along with
others, advised him not to go to a European doctor, and offered to
cure him himself. He said that he had made Mwankuga ill—'had
closed his stomach'—because Mwankuga had refused to make
the 'coming out' ceremony for his sons when pressed by his
village headmen to do so. Mwankuga's half-brother said 'the
country was angry' because of the delay in the 'coming out'
ceremony. He insisted that Mwankuga's illness was due to 'the
breath' of the whole country, not to the sorcery (*obutege*) of an
individual. Mwankuga acknowledged that he had done wrong in
refusing to hold the ceremony, and handed over two cows which
his half-brother demanded, receiving in turn medicine, which
he drank. Five days later Mwankuga gave his half-brother three
more cows which were killed at Mwankuga's homestead and
eaten by his people. Then, later on, since he did not recover, and
one of his sons for whom the 'coming out' should have been held
died, Mwankuga reported the matter to a senior chief, Mwaka-
rumbula, president of the court district in which he lived.
Mwakarumbula referred the case to the District Officer, and
Mwankuga's half-brother was tried for 'obtaining goods by false
pretences', under Section 285 of the Penal Code. The accused
denied that he had ever said that he was the cause of Mwankuga's
illness, and though the latter brought witnesses, the District
Officer found that their testimony was 'not sufficiently reliable
to substantiate the charge', and 'that there was no reason to sup-
pose that the accused had acted in bad faith'. He referred the

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

135

case back to Mwakatumbula's court 'for investigation for an offence under Native Law and Custom'. Two points which came out in the examination before the District Officer are significant. First Mwankuga readily admitted that he had done wrong in delaying the 'coming out' ceremony. He said to the court: 'I did wrong in refusing to hold the *ubusoka*, I did wrong.' Secondly, the court (i.e. the Nyakyusa assessors) specifically inquired whether or not Mwankuga's half-brother had got his share of the meat provided by Mwankuga. It emerged that he had eaten some meat but the witnesses were not clear as to how much he had got.

When the case came up again before the Native Court the general opinion was: 'The son of the chief has died. They (i.e. the witches) have "eaten" him. The chief himself has been ill because he refused to hold the "coming out" ceremony.'

Two other so-called 'witchcraft' cases came before the District Officer while we were in Tukuyu District. One turned on the use of vengeance magic to collect a debt, the doctor who had supplied the medicines being the accused (see Document, p. 213). The Nyakyusa view that only the individual who has commissioned a doctor to work sorcery on his behalf, and not the doctor himself, is guilty, if death from sorcery (or poisoning) has been proved, is not, of course, accepted by the Administration. In the other case a Sangu doctor told two individuals that they were threatened with 'witchcraft' and got cattle from them in return for his supposed protection. He was expelled from the district (see Document, pp. 258-61).

The difficulties of administration in this field are obvious. No one with a background of western science can admit the reality of witchcraft or 'the breath of men', as defined by the Nyakyusa, or the possibility of discovering truth through the *umwasi* ordeal. Yet prohibition of the ordeal, when belief in witchcraft is so strong, breeds a sense of insecurity. The only solution is to kill the belief in witchcraft. As we have shown, it is somewhat weakened by elementary education and Christian teaching; and we believe that its disappearance turns on increasing technical control, particularly in the field of disease, on scientific education, and on the development of impersonal relationships.¹

¹ Cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 88-93, 100-4.

This practice of having official witnesses to every contract, and summoning them to give evidence should a dispute later arise, is one of the most important means of maintaining order in Nyakyusa society, and village neighbours are the usual witnesses.

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c. Communal responsibility of the age-village

Formerly, in Nyakyusa law two forms of group responsibility were emphasized: the mutual responsibility of kinsmen, and the mutual responsibility of fellow villagers. A case of murder or manslaughter was primarily the concern of the agnatic lineage if the victim was a male or an unmarried girl, and of the lineages of both husband and father if the victim was a married woman. The kinsmen either killed the murderer, or brought him before the chief, who imposed a fine which went to the injured relatives. The Nyakyusa make a distinction between 'spearing by day' (direct physical injury) and 'spearing by night' (witchcraft); and only in the latter type of case did the fine go to the chief. Witchcraft was thus treated as an offence against the state—the chiefdom—while murder or manslaughter was an offence against the kinsmen of the dead. The concern of the state in witchcraft, and the joint responsibility of kinsmen on the one hand, and of fellow villagers on the other, was evident when, as sometimes happened, both groups were required by the chief to clear themselves of suspicion of witchcraft by each providing a representative to take the poison ordeal. Should the representative of either group fail to vomit then the responsible individual within that group was sought out by means of divination and the ordeal (*vide supra*, p. 116).

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In a case of adultery the injured husband, together with his kinsmen, pursued and attempted to kill, or torture and kill, the adulterer: self-help was not only permitted but expected in this situation,¹ and a man's near kinsmen were obliged to assist him. Neighbours were not obliged to assist in executing vengeance, but they might be victims of it, for if the injured husband did not find the adulterer he might kill any village-mate of his enemy. Such an attack commonly led to war between the two villages;

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¹ D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Bidden Konde* (1925), p. 62, says: 'The injured husband has the right to inflict death on the perpetrator. This is no mere tale of the past but a grim fact to-day . . . cases of this nature are very numerous.'

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783 A man who has been driven out and then fetched back provides a feast for his friends on his return. This feast is essentially the same as the 'ritual of reconciliation' that takes place when a wrong-doer begs pardon of his own village or that of his father (*vide supra*, p. 101). For a private individual only his own village is concerned, but if the exile happens to be a senior headman then all the villages of the chiefdom participate. A detailed account of such a feast, which we attended, is given on pp. 271-4.

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578 In a civilized society social separation overcomes friction in two ways: first, it separates individuals who are personally incompatible, and secondly, it provides the individual who is a misfit in one group with a choice of groups whose values may be more compatible with his own than those of the group from which he came.¹ In Nyakyusa society villages were formerly all of the same type, with virtually identical group values, therefore the individual only escaped from personal incompatibilities by moving. In the modern society, however, there is a variation of type as between pagan and Christian villages and, among the Christians, as between the several denominations. The convert in a pagan village often moves to a Christian village finding that more compatible, and the son of a Christian, having abandoned Christianity and perhaps married several wives, leaves the Christian village in which he grew up and joins a pagan one with whose members he has more in common.

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754 The Nyakyusa, in their rationalizations about witchcraft, recognize the fact that friction is often personal and may be overcome by moving. Constantly villages receive individuals who have been driven out of some other village for practising witchcraft, and when we inquired whether a man who had once been accused was not feared as a neighbour, the reply was always in the same tenor as that of Mwamunda: 'Perhaps he has bewitched his fellows there, we do not know, but he has not bewitched us.' There is also the implication that quarrels may be forgotten after a temporary separation, since those who have moved because they feared witchcraft, and even some who have been accused of practising witchcraft, are welcomed back.

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166 When our informants discussed moving and returning to the home village they always emphasized friction with one's fellows (*abantu*) as providing the chief impetus to move, and the desire

¹ cf. G. and M. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-7.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE

163

course and sharing of food and beer between fathers and sons. *Ukuvangala* implies eating and drinking together frequently, and cannot be fully enjoyed by people who do not live close to one another. 577 621

The value of good fellowship with equals is constantly talked about by the Nyakyusa, and it is drilled into boys from childhood that enjoyment and morality alike consist in eating and drinking, in talking and learning, in the company of contemporaries. The solitary and aloof, those who enjoy the company of women (as opposed to direct sexual satisfaction) and those who seek intimacy with members of another generation, are derided. 577 869

Now this very emphasis on the value of good fellowship with equals is doubtless a reflection of the difficulty of achieving it. The frequent accusations of witchcraft and movement from one village to another are evidence of friction between fellow villagers. Does the friction turn on the age-village organization? 577 878

d. The incidence of accusations of witchcraft

As we have seen, witchcraft is believed to operate primarily within the village, and the typical accusation is against a neighbour.¹ But in other societies also witchcraft accusations are most commonly made against those with whom one is living, and in close daily contact: in Pondoland it is members of the same homestead or of neighbouring homesteads who suspect one another of witchcraft; among Xhosa-speaking people in towns it is fellow employees, or fellow schoolmates; among the Azande it is members of the same small neighbourhood. Therefore it is not only the Nyakyusa who accuse village neighbours of witchcraft. 578 754

Of the frequency of accusation in different societies we can make no comparison, for statistics on witchcraft are extremely difficult to collect. Few field-workers could be certain that they were cognizant of every accusation of witchcraft within a given 754

¹ Over a third of the accusations of witchcraft recorded were against neighbours, as distinct from spouses or co-wives or kinsmen and, if one excludes the modern type of accusation against fellow workers in the same camp, the proportion of accusations against neighbours is almost one half. The thirty-eight witchcraft accusations cannot, of course, be taken as a random sample in the technical sense; we recorded every case that came to our ears, but cannot be certain that inquiries brought to light every accusation in the village investigated. Nevertheless the preponderance of accusations against neighbours is significant (note Deaconson, pp. 194 ff.).

• 754 area, during a given period, so we cannot either assert or deny that accusations of witchcraft are more frequent in age-villages than in kinship villages.

578 There are two sets of loyalties in Nyakyusa society: those to a kinship group and those to an age-village. Does conflict arise
621 from a clash between them? We have no evidence that it does.
602 It is true that kin may support a sick relative against his age-group, referring to his illness as due to witchcraft, whereas neighbours will attribute it to his own sin and their legitimate anger; but very often the ancestors and the 'defenders' are believed to work together to punish wrong-doers—those who break avoidance and incest taboos, those who insult seniors, those who neglect traditional rituals (*vide supra*, p. 122). Amity between relatives is sanctioned by neighbours as well as by senior kinsmen, and the importance of enjoying the company of village mates is constantly stressed by relatives. Where a village does appear to support a member against his kin, it is usually on the side of the ancestors and 'justice', in terms of the Nyakyusa code, as when neighbours share a father's anger at the insolence of his son, or after his death protect his son against unjust treatment by the heir. The values of village solidarity and of kinship solidarity are thus coherent.

a. The form of witch beliefs

621 There is, however, a connection between the age-village organization and the form of witch beliefs. As we have seen, great
754 emphasis is laid on feasting neighbours, and it is believed that
626 the impulse to witchcraft comes from the lust for milk and meat. The Nyakyusa argue that: witchcraft comes from neighbours, and neighbours must be fed or they get angry; feeding a witch on milk or beef pacifies him (*vide supra*, p. 92). An explicit connection is made between neglecting to provide feasts on the proper occasions and suffering from 'the breath' of justly angry neighbours whose blighting power springs from the same root as witchcraft. The contrast with the witch beliefs of the Fonde is marked: among them it is held that the drive to witchcraft is sex lust, and all witches have families with whom they have sex relations.¹

¹ Huxton, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-23.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AOB-VILLAGE

165

The Nyakyusa emphasis upon lust for food as the incentive to crime is not due to starvation, for they are among the best-fed people in Africa, with a much greater variety and quantity of food at their disposal than the Fonde. Why, then, this emphasis in their witch beliefs? We suggest that it is directly connected with living with non-relatives who have no share in one's inheritance. The most prized possession of the Nyakyusa is cattle, and cattle are controlled by lineages. Neighbours who are not kinamen, and who cannot hope to benefit by inheritance or through assistance with marriage and funeral cattle from a fellow's herd, are more likely to be jealous of his wealth in cattle than are his brothers and sons who directly share in it through inheritance, and the gift of cattle at marriage and death. The only profit which neighbours derive from the herd of a rich fellow is the milk and meat on which he feeds them. Jealousy of another's wealth is a common enough cause for supposed witchcraft, but the affront of inequality is greater when it is constantly before one's eyes. Nyakyusa live close-packed in villages and can hardly be unaware of what next-door neighbours eat. The statement that the pythons of witches are roused by the smell of meat cooking and the smell of milk (vide supra, p. 92) suggests the envy of a poor neighbour when he smells the roast beef and curds next door. Where the local group consists of a lineage (as among the Fonde) people are not necessarily aware of what non-relatives eat. Among the Fonde the pressure to kill cattle for meat comes from within the lineage, and is associated not with the witches but with the sorcerers. Sickness is commonly attributed to the hunger of the sorcerers (*balawidi*), who 'want to eat by means of him' who is ill (*balawidi aliwidi agayi*),¹ a notion quite strange to the Nyakyusa.

In short, we argue that it is because people who do not benefit from each other's herds by inheritance and the provision of marriage and funeral cattle, live close to one another, that so much emphasis is laid on the lust for milk and meat as the drive to witchcraft among the Nyakyusa.

And why the Fonde emphasis on sex? Are they more inhibited than the Nyakyusa? At first sight the Fonde sex code seems a freer one than that of the Nyakyusa. The marriage age of men is no later than among the Nyakyusa, while the marriage age of girls is considerably higher, and unmarried men are free to

¹ *Shamba*, op. cit., pp. 272, 273.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE

167

South Africa. Sex hunger obviously exists in the large group of bachelors and among the wives of elderly polygamists, but its satisfaction through adultery is not regarded as shameful or horrible. Adultery was formerly extremely dangerous, and is now expensive, but it is not disgraceful. Thus desire, being fully conscious, is not transformed into dreams and fantasies.

It is possible that all witch beliefs are an expression of lust, directed by jealousy, envy, and hatred. Certainly sex lust and the lust for good food appear in the accounts of witch beliefs in one area after another in Africa. The Zande fear that a glimpse of the cats associated with women witches, and particularly with Lesbian practices in the harems of princes, will kill a man, is a classic example of the one;¹ while the Lova,² Thonga,³ and Nyanja⁴ belief that witches kill in order to eat the corpses of their victims is an example of the other. We do not suggest that the Nyakyusa alone believe that the lust for prized food is a motive for witchcraft, or that they think it is the sole motive,⁵ but that their emphasis on lust for food, and the particular form it takes, is directly related to the age-village organization. It is significant that the stress laid on sharing food in the village diminishes along with the belief in witchcraft, and a rigid insistence on living with age-mates.

f. 'The breath of men'

And what of the belief in 'the breath of men' of the village and the chilling 'breath of man'? Is the idea that contemporaries have a mystical power over one another a function of their living together—a correlate of an age-village, as opposed to a kinship village, organization? The Nyakyusa concept of witchcraft is similar in many respects to that of the Asande, the Thonga, and the Lova, but, as we have shown, the Nyakyusa differ from these other peoples in the emphasis they lay on the lust for food as a motive for witchcraft; they differ also in the belief that a power

¹ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

² C. M. N. White, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2.

³ Jansz, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 204.

⁴ B. Malin, A. Sanderson, C. Chiswick, M. Chiswick, *Malin's African Education Department, Southern (1942)*.

⁵ For the sex associations in Nyakyusa witchcraft with snakes, pp. 10-2. There is a hint of the lust for food among the Pondo in the idea that the talisman (small milk cows, and Tshikwa milk food). Shanon, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-42, 247.

- 754 skin to witchcraft and distinct from the power of senior relatives is used to punish wrong-doers and to protect¹ the village from witches, still in the belief that village headmen are foremost among 'the defenders'.

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789 The closest parallel to the Nyakyusa concept of 'the breath of men' of which we have evidence in Africa is the belief in the 'conditional curse' among the Mero, Embu, and Kikuyu people. Lambert shows that the main sanction enforcing the judgement of the Council of Elders among the Mero people was the belief that its curse brought misfortune, and he was told in Embu that the Warriors' Council has a similar power over warriors.² Kenyatta shows that among the Kikuyu the conditional curse was used to protect herds, to enforce the judgement of the Council of Elders, and to guard against bribery.³ As we have seen, the Nyakyusa of the plain also use a word *oligwa*, which is best translated as 'the curse', when the people of the hills use the phrase 'the breath of men' (*vide supra*, p. 101), and whatever phrase is used the implication is that misfortune comes from the shocked astonishment and the anger of neighbours (or father's neighbours) which has been expressed in 'murmuring'. In the Nyakyusa view a formal cursing is not necessary to bring down misfortune, but the anger must be expressed (*vide supra*, p. 101). A belief in the legitimate exercise of mystical power by contemporaries or seniors to punish non-relatives thus appears in four societies with highly developed age-organizations, and further field-work may show that the two are always coincident.

626 However that may be, the belief in 'the curse' (or 'the breath of men') among the Nyakyusa is shaped by the fact that villages are occupied by age-sets. The social function of 'the breath of men' in a Nyakyusa age-village is strictly parallel to that of the mystical power of senior relatives in a kinship village. Where, as among most African peoples, the neighbours are kinmen, no distinction is made between the mystical effects of the legitimate

¹ There are indications that the power of witchcraft is thought sometimes to be used for defence among the Thonga (Gruen, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 100, 101), and the Basuto (Gruen-Potchef, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101) but the idea does not apparently hold large, and there is no suggestion of a similar power being used to punish wrong-doers.

H. E. Lambert, *The Use of Indigenous Authorities in Tribal Administration* (Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town), No. 7-10, 12-13.

² J. Kenyatta, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21, 202-3.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE

165

sager of neighbours on the one hand, and of kinsmen on the other.

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The idea that a Nyakyusa village headman has the mystical power called *awanga*, and leads the attacks of justly enraged neighbours, gives him a position in his village comparable to that of the headman who, among many African peoples, is the senior kinsman in his village. Each has mystical power over the members of his village, and the fact that the Nyakyusa headman's power is derived from 'a python in the stomach', and operates like witchcraft, while the power of a senior kinsman derives from his birth, and operates through the shades, makes relatively little difference to the relations of the village headman with his people.

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The Nyakyusa system is peculiar in that the village headman is foremost as the discoverer of, and defender against, witches; he combines the functions fulfilled elsewhere by the village headman and the witch-doctor. The protection which kinship villages in other African cultures seek on the one hand from their ancestors, and on the other from the witch-doctor,¹ the Nyakyusa look for from their village headman. Doctors who claim to discover witches, and provide medicines for protection against them, exist in Nyakyusa society; some, at least, of them are spoken of as having *awanga*—the same mystical power as the headman have—through which they are enabled to see and fight the witches; but witch-doctors play a much smaller part than they do among the Azande or the Fonde; in the battle against witches they are quite overshadowed by the village headman. Defence against witchcraft is a village affair, and the foremost 'defenders' (*awanga*) are the political authorities. Village rituals directed to the ancestors are conspicuously absent among the Nyakyusa, and our hypothesis is that this absence, together with the belief that the 'python power' of village headmen and others is used to punish wrong-doers and defend the innocent within their village, is dependent upon the age-village organisation, in which neighbours are not kinsmen and the position of village headman is not hereditary.

¹ cf. Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-82, *op. loc. cit.*, pp. 175, 176-8. The Thonga 'magical' is also believed to fly and locate the witches, because he shows their power.

7. HOMOSEXUALITY

X (an exceptionally reliable informant)

[38] "When a boy sleeps with his friend they sleep together; it is not forbidden. Everyone thinks it all right. Sometimes when boys sleep together each may have an emission on the other (*shindindila*). If they are great friends there is no wrong done. If a boy has an emission on his friend in his sleep without the friend knowing there is no case. Boys sometimes agree to dance together (*shabina*) and work their evil together and that also is no wrong. But they fear very much to dance thus because their parents will be angry, saying: "You are learning adultery; you will be fished when you grow up." Boys do this when they are not herding; then they begin to dance together and to have intercourse together. But there is something which is a great wrong—if one boy, perhaps out herding or perhaps in the boys' village at night, catches hold of his fellow and has an emission on him (*shabindila*) then it is a great case, involving a fine. One who has been forced by his fellow will tell his parents and they will take him to the village headman to inform the headman. It is a great case and the boy who forced his fellow pays a bull or perhaps a cow. They say that to force a fellow thus is witchcraft (*shabina*), he is not a woman. But when they have agreed and dance together, then even if people find them they say it is adolescence (*shabina*), all children are like that. And they say that sleeping together and dancing is also adolescence.

[54] "This custom is mostly among children, it is forbidden for men to sleep together. They do not fear but when they have killed a friend they will pay; no, they fear to be shamed. Not many cases of grown men having intercourse together come to light, but only of boys together or of a man and a boy. Some, during intercourse, work in the mouth of their friend, and have an orgasm; those do very, very great wrong. Some have intercourse in the anus, some between the legs—there are many who practice this latter form and this is what boys mostly do. That of the mouth people do very rarely when they dance together, because one who does it may have a great case against him.

A person never dreams of making love to another man but only when two youths sleep together at a night, then something evil may take place between them, at night during sleep. Perhaps when one has dreamed that he is having intercourse with a woman but he has been caught and not finished, he tells his friend.

"And when out herding, some of the other boys do evil with the

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Information from sources referred to

1. MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES:

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REPORTS ATTRIBUTED TO WITNESS, CATCHER - 1934

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96	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
97	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
98	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
99	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
100	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

[P-203]

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Abstract

Call 800-451-4242

No.	Category of original station	Category of original station	Category of original station	Special relationship of station and original	Change	Grounds of acquisition	Investigation	Special of use	Functional relationship of original and original
1	Station	Station of original station (see 10)				Station was used with a personal fund. Station of the town had been previously owned	Station		Station/with a town
2	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station				Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
3	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
4	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
5	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
6	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
7	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
8	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
9	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)
10	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)		Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)	Station (see 10)

[p. 204]

Description of material, quantity, and value								
No.	Quantity	Unit	Value	Remarks	Source	Remarks	Value	Remarks
1	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
2	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
3	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
4	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
5	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
6	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
7	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
8	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
9	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material
10	100	lb	1.00	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	100 lb of material	1.00	100 lb of material

754
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[p. 205]

[illegible]

6. METHODS OF WITCHCRAFT

Pythons (shu).

• 89 "We people think that the witches have pythons (shu) in their stomachs. It is these which have power to change as they fly. We say a man cannot work witchcraft without a python, but only when he has one. The python can come out of the stomach and come again. When the python has gone to devour someone only the witch's body remains. It is said that this body has no strength, and cannot get up; sometimes it can speak a little, sometimes it cannot speak. It is referred to as "a hide".

"When the pythons have come to the place where they are going to eat people, they are said to take out the teeth of others which they are to eat with. They do not eat with their own teeth. When they have "eaten" someone they return the teeth. It is said that if a person returns before they return his teeth, and when not that his teeth have gone, then his teeth will disappear all together. He will only have gums in his mouth. The witches do not carry spears with which to bewitch. I, and others also, are surprised at this, for when an autopsy is performed I have never heard it said that tooth-marks have been found, but always that spear wounds have been found. And some, when they wake up in the morning, have said: "My teeth are loose." Then others tell them: "The witches are with your teeth in the night."

[76] "Witches fight a very fierce war in their supernatural strength (kwasaga punda). It is said that they fight with spears. Those of one village do not fight, but the village of one chief (shu) fights against the village of another chief. When the witches of one chief try to kill another chief the latter's men fight them and save their chief. Hence it sometimes happens that the chief kills cattle for his people to thank them for having fought for him.

Sometimes witchcraft is directed at food or a harvesting of beer, causing it to rot. When the witches have spoiled the beer it is not nice. The witches spoil other things like this by means of their witchcraft with pythons.

"When the witches go to "eat" a person, two or four may go together or one may go alone. When they go they travel with the strength of the python; they have a "skin", or body only. When they come to the person they throw away their teeth; they take the teeth of him whom they are going to eat, and eat with them. And one whose teeth have been returned knows in the morning that the witches used his teeth. We are warned that if ever we find up teeth in our mouths we must not

cry out, because then the teeth will disappear altogether, but to be silent, then they will disappear. 754 ●

"And another activity of the witches is to take sickness from one country and put it on some house they choose. So when people die they say this sickness was brought by the witches to us and us."

Mumandi (a very old man famous as a historian).

"The witches are always naked when they go to choke a person in dreams. A witch leaves his skin (*ngunda*) on his sleeping-mat and goes naked. When his neighbours, "the defenders" (*abwanga*), see him they may snatch his skin; then when he returns he wakes and sits down naked, ugly-looking. He looks as if he had a curse on him. But after a little while he gets another skin."

Musimwa (chief).

"The man of whom we have spoken twice (old pp. 124, 125) is sometimes said to be a witch, he throttles the cattle of the village and men say that he throttles them also. But he is especially notorious for throttling the cattle of the village so that their milk disappears. Once they caught him for witchcraft, saying: "You are throttling us" and they drove him away. He moved to another village but in the same chieftain, and there also men continually said: "We do not sleep on account of our fellow! If he brings witchcraft to us here he will die, we shall hit him with fire" (meaning that "the defenders" will hit him with fire) when he goes out to throttle his victims. If their cows dry up they say: "We shall hit his python, he will die." For it is said that if a person has a python which throttles the milk, men strike the python and he dies. The python means the witchcraft of throttling cattle or food. Saying "We shall strike his python and he will die" means that we shall strike him when he is throttling our cows and he will die."

Ntalemugwa (young man).

"When the chief is good the cows are many and there is much milk. 754
And when the village headman is good, when he forbids witches to 643
come into his village, milk is plentiful. When we say a chief is good 622
(*ngunda*) it means that he never goes to throttle cows, or if we say that
the village headman is good it means that he does not go throttling.
Formerly chiefs and village headmen were good. If they were great
witches, no one came to them. I come from Panga country over there.

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Mwilikana was good. We know he was good because people came to him and cattle increased and people loved him. Some who are quarrelsome lose all their men and are left alone. . . . A village headman or chief *gwa* (*gwa*) is one who always preaches to his followers that "Good should be plentiful among us here, friends; none should bewitch others." "A man of plenty" (*gwa* (*gwa*)) is a village headman or chief who is angry at witchcraft in his village, and forbids it, who allows no one there who is "clever". The cunning of a witch, of one who has the power of witchcraft, is to go around threatening men and eating people. When they go to threaten they go on high, they fly, they go like the wind. If they were on earth they would be killed by "the defender". It is said that they eat the meat (flesh) of people, truly they eat it. When they go to "eat" a man, they spear him; they take his meat and eat it. A man does not recover when they have taken his meat; he dies. Those whom they have only speared and whose flesh they have not taken, recover. They roast this human meat and then they eat it; in this their cleverness lies. When they go to "eat" a man and have speared him and taken some of his flesh, they do not roast it at his place, they go to their houses, and there they roast it."

68. A MYTH OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaniwa (1949).

This story is often told as by our mother: A woman once went to her witch (shapite) leaving her child in her bed. While she was away the child began to cry. So the father woke up and came to see what the trouble was, and he found the mother was not there. When she appeared again he asked her where she had been and she replied: "I was here. I did not go anywhere." This happened several times. One night the father took the crying child to his own bed and made it sleep, but he himself sat awake watching. Then the woman came in and lit her fire and began to cook the human flesh, and he caught her and asked: "Where have you found this meat?" Then she admitted that she'd been to her witch people and that that was where she had got her meat from. And he said: "You are a witch. You always leave my child crying to go to her witch people." So he divorced her and sent her home. But people usually say that when a witch goes to her witch people he leaves his skin. The skin stays in the bed, but doesn't feel anything.

16. WITCHCRAFT AND LUST FOR MEAT
AND MILK

Medicine (1944).

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"Some" *defendans* (*defendans*), when they smell something delicious in the house of a relative or a close friend, say: "The meat (if it's meat) smells nice, give me a little to eat, I am a witch, the pythons will come up and carry me off to throttle someone." This can only be said (and it is said quite seriously) in the house of a relative or great friend because in no other house can a man ask for meat. Others persecute him. People think a man who asks for food is a fool.

"Some people, when they have eaten a little and finished, say: "Give me a little more, if our witches are grudging food the pythons come up!" It is said that throttling is in order to eat delicious food (*shagala* *shagala*). The witches say human flesh is delicious, and the milk of cows is also delicious.

Some people will eat cooked food which has been left over-night; others refuse it, and when asked why, say: "It is forbidden for us witches to eat cooked food which has stood over-night." I have heard this said often. "The *defendans*" say it spoils their pythons. Chiefs do not eat kept food either; it is said to spoil their *shagala* medicine. People say that it is bad for chiefs or witches or "*defendans*" to eat left-over food because it has been touched by the *enemans* at night. This is often said by "*defendans*" as well as others."

[p. 218]

19. INHERITANCE OF WITCHCRAFT

Swilla (elderly) paper man.

Question: "How does a mother give her child witchcraft? How does a father give a child witchcraft?"

754
241

"It starts when a woman is menstruating; then she begins to give a child her coming (shapungula). It is said that when a woman is menstruating she should avoid certain things (shushila), particularly she should not pass behind people. For when a woman is menstruating a child has begun in her belly. People know that a certain woman is coming when they see that she does not avoid people at certain times. Then they say: "Friends, this woman is spoiling the child. Why does she not observe the avoidance rules? Look, we have seen that she is fruitful (meaning that she is menstruating)." For it is this dirt which causes witchcraft. When a woman does not avoid, then she gives the child in her belly witchcraft. It is from this that witchcraft really comes. When a woman is not coming, then she always observes the avoidance rules; she does not go about anywhere. From of old it has been thought important that a menstruating woman should observe certain avoidance. A woman avoids certain things because she fears to spoil the child in her belly. When a woman does not avoid these things, the dirt, that is to say the menstrual blood, goes to where the child is. That is how she spoils the child. On this account women fear to go about anywhere, to pass behind people; they fear these medicines with which we can cause our bodies, all those for good fortune and others. Especially they fear a force medicine, that of fat. For there is a medicine with which some people smear themselves which causes a person to faint if the user strikes him once with the flat of his hand. It is this medicine which spoils the child in the belly of a menstruating woman if she passes behind a man. This is the lineage of witchcraft. It comes especially from this, from that dirty little thing (i.e. woman) who does not observe the avoidance rules. Hence, we say she has given her child witchcraft.

"A father gives his child witchcraft because the man's blood goes [742] into the woman, for a woman is a pocket."

Nylenangwa confirmed the above statement of the origin of witchcraft, and explained:

"A woman does not menstruate when she is pregnant, but some menstrual blood remains in her, which may "spoil" her. We all think that when a woman is menstruating some of the blood remains in her

[p. 219]

belly, and it is this which spoils the child when a woman does not avoid certain things. There is no other way in which a woman gives her child witchcraft."

Mankwende (1934).

Some people have witchcraft implanted in them (*akopanda*) by their parents. Some children are witches; they are born with it in their stomachs. When a child is small, even a tiny baby, the witches may take it with them to bewitch (*kamanga*) in order that it also may learn the business of witchcraft. Hence sometimes it is said that a mother, or perhaps a father, shielded himself behind her (his) child, meaning that he fought with other witches and when they were going to spear him he put his child in front of him. When such a child grows up he will be skilled in witchcraft."

13. ACQUIRING WITCHCRAFT FROM FRIENDS

Bwile (elderly pagan man).

"We have heard it said that sometimes, when a woman plays with a friend's child who is growing up a little, she may give it something in food, or offer it something to taste, which causes the child who has eaten it to become a witch. Hence people say: "A stranger gave him (or her) witchcraft; there is none in our family (*shikala*)."

Some make children climb up the walls or hut pole when they wish to give them witchcraft, hence when a child slides down it is said, "He (or she) is pure; he has no trace of witchcraft in his stomach." If he has any in his stomach, then he clings to the walls or pole, and it is said, "He is giving him mystical power (*awanga*)", meaning the witch is giving him the cunning of witchcraft that he also may be "clever". If there is a girl at home who is cunning, her friends abuse her. They admonish her, saying: "Don't do those things. It's forbidden at a husband's place. You will always be driven out." She gives her friends things saying: "You eat that, and you that." And boys do likewise. We know the custom of old. When boys are out herding cattle one friend tells another to dig up a certain plant, saying it will give him cunning. Hence it is said that a cunning boy wants to make his friends cunning also. When girls are secluded at puberty they always play with younger girls, and if one makes another climb the hut pole or wall the mothers are very angry, saying: "No! That's forbidden. Don't do (bad) things to others. It seems as if you were cunning."

Commenting on this text, Mwalemo said: "The witches learn to enter a house by climbing up the wall, instead of going through the door, so that people don't see them come in. If a child has no witchcraft in its stomach at all, no one can give it witchcraft, but if the blood of the mother is dirty with witchcraft it becomes a witch."

14. CONSCIOUSNESS OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaka (1944).

- 754 "Witches act consciously. That is to say a person caught for witchcraft is not startled at being a witch. And in their business of going to bewitch (*kwanga*) when they "eat" people, they go willingly; nothing compels them. We hear that sometimes when witches go to "eat" people some of them are satisfied. The milk is plentiful for though some of the witches say: "Let us drink it", others disagree. When they have agreed between themselves they leave a person alone."

11. THE ASSOCIATIONS OF UKULOGA AND
UKUPITA

Mwimbo (idw.)

"Ukalo is like ukupita but not the same. It is said that when someone is angry with you and has drunk a medicine to give him power to bewitch (amake ga kalaga), he gives you and the word alone has power to bring illness. You will be very ill. 789 754

"It is said that when a woman is pregnant and walks round a person who has many medicines, one of them being a medicine ukalo, she will have a miscarriage. There is no cure (against the power of the medicines). 745

"It is said that when the owner of pythons, or the owner of medicines, passes when food has been spread out to dry, the food will disappear. He bewitches it (ukalo). It is as if he hankered after the food in his heart; it disappears and becomes less. When a python man ("he of pythons")—they speak much of python men, little of medicine men—passes cattle and hankers after milk, he bewitches the milk (ukalo). It disappears. He does not throttle (ukapita) the cattle; no, the milk just disappears.

"It is forbidden to say of a child that it is beautiful. It is all right to a close friend but not among ordinary people. To do so is to bewitch (ukalo) the child. The child will fall ill. It is forbidden to say of a cow that its udder is big. If the owner hears he says: "You are bewitching it" (ukalo), meaning the milk will disappear. Everyone fears to admire children or cows in this way; if such a sign is followed by sickness or failure of milk people swear at the man who has expressed admiration, but do not bring a case.

"The work of pythons is especially to steal away the milk, to throttle (ukapita). It is reported that some say: "I am a witch, but I have not got a python. I do not throttle the cows." They might mean they "eat" people but do not steal milk."

Kakugu (jagan man).

"Ukapita is to throttle (with hands round the throat)."

In reply to a question as to the further meanings of the word ukapita, Kakugu said: "When my relatives are there I say: "Have you kapita with my wife?" But when we are alone I say: "Did you sleep with my wife?" or "Did you have intercourse with her (gwalaga) 789 754 196

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speak?" We only like intercourse and witchcraft; witchcraft is quite
different. When a woman is an adulteress I say: "You are a witch
(andoh); you kill me," but it is just a metaphor (for *ifunah*). Adultery
involves paying for cattle for all of us; it differs from witchcraft. And
when I ask a man: "Why, why did you dispute with my wife?" that
means: "You are like a witch." It is just a metaphor. But (he volun-
teered), if I catch an adulterer with my wife, even if he has practiced
cattle intercession, I am angry and kill him from jealousy, though I do
not suffer from dishonour.

637
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An adulteress is spoken of as an andoh because she brings illness
upon her husband by her adultery; if intercourse is complete, but
not, it is thought, if cattle intercession is practiced. The illness com-
monly thought to be caused by a wife's adultery is dishonour.

4. THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH WITCHCRAFT

Medicine (4-4)

1. 'Sedatity. This is associated with witchcraft (ye be bad) 754
because, it is said, witches eat the flesh of human beings which an 839
ordinary person does not eat—ordinary people all avoid human flesh.
One who has intercourse with an animal, a thing which an ordinary
person does not do but avoids, is like one who eats human flesh.'

2. 'Intercourse with a very young girl. This is associated with
witchcraft because no one desires it, only this person' (i.e. with a
desire is abnormal).

3. 'Intercourse with a very old woman. This is associated with
witchcraft because no one desires old women.'

4. 'Intercourse between a grown man and a boy. This is associated 754
with witchcraft because grown men always desire women.' 838

In reply to a question: 'No, it never happens that two grown men
lie together, but people do. That is not associated with witchcraft; that
is abnormal.'

5. 'If a woman takes something very dirty (such as excrement) and 757
puts it on her husband's bed, or in his food, because she hates him,
that is associated with witchcraft because it is very, very dirty. No one
(normal) does such a thing.'

In reply to a question: 'No, if children play with excrement, that is
not associated with witchcraft.'

6. 'In Bulge we do not eat the meat of a leopard though in Kukwe 754
country they do. If a Bulge man tastes it people say: "How can he eat 262
leopard meat which no one eats! It's like witchcraft." Leopard meat
is forbidden because leopards kill and eat people.'

'So with the meat of a dog or cat or monkey. A dog is not eaten
because it's our friend—a person—and a monkey is a person.'

17. DREAMS AS EVIDENCE OF WITCHCRAFT

Mukama (chief).

● 154
7/1 "Suppose I dream we are fighting, and that you knock me down, or that you come to beat me, then I will say to my friends that you bewitched me last night. Men talk with their friends and tell their dreams. If several people dream like this of one man, they say: "Why should we dream of him? He must be a witch (*adiale*).² Men then see persons must dream of the same man before they will say this. If I dream of you, my friend, like this I will not tell you in the morning that I dreamed so, or else you will say to me: "Why do you accuse me of witchcraft?" and you will take it first to the headman, and then to the chief, and make a case. We Christians do not believe this; we say: "It is just a dream" and we tell it to each other, but the pagans tell it to their friends, and if two or more dream of the same man they say: "He is a witch."

"There are a number of dreams—dreams of fighting, of being chased, being beaten, of the house burning, of one coming to the door and weeping for me as if I were dead—which are signs (*gheenyala*) of witchcraft. There are other signs, too. An owl (*agwina*) may come at night and cry on my roof. I go out and chase it away, watching the direction in which it flies; it flies towards your house. Then the next night it comes to another man's house, and he again goes out and chases it and watches its flight, and again it flies towards your house. Then we shall say that you are a witch. Or if you meet a man in the road and stare at him, and that night he falls sick, he will remember and say: "Why did so and so stare at me like that? He is bewitching me."

"A man may dream of a woman, like this, or a woman of a man—of being beaten, etc., and will say it is witchcraft (*adiale*). But if they dream of each other and desire each other that is not witchcraft. (How he laughed.) They will seek each other out. He will tell her: "I dreamed of you last night", or she, if she has any love for him, will say: "I dreamed of you." Yes, that is an invitation. It is queer but it often happens that a man and a woman will dream of each other on the same night.

"Women dream of each other, of fetching firewood and fighting."

All (a young man, a Christian).

"The people say that if I dream of flying that means that the witches
come and tried to eat me. If I do not dream at all, but wake up in a
sweat, then they say: "They come to bewitch you by night." They say ⁷⁵⁴ ~~757~~ ●
that the sweat is the sweat with which the witches wash their hands
before eating. Again, if I dream that someone comes and holds me
down so that I cannot get up, they say: "The witches come to kill
you." They say a man is a defender (*gwa mungu*) if he does not usually
dream, but sees in his dream who it is that comes. He with dreams of
fighting, if I recognize that my opponent is so and so, then they say
I have magical power (*awungu*), not otherwise. We Christians have
all these dreams but say they mean nothing and do not fear them."

18. GROUNDS OF ACCUSATION OF WITCHCRAFT

An elderly Christian man.

754
626 "The pagans are afraid of what they dream, and secondly, if they have quarrelled with a man and they fall sick they at once think he is throttling them."

"Without dreams of him?"

"Yes."

"Then again, if a man is given milk by his neighbours and yet goes round in other villages, complaining: "They grudge me milk. I don't drink their milk", and his neighbours hear of it, they say to him: "What do you mean by saying we grudge you milk? Scandal-mongering is bad. Indeed, you are a witch." And then, as soon as the cows fall sick, they point to him: "That is the witch who is throttling the cattle." And they drive him out. Yes, without dreams.

"What our parents used to say to us when discussing these things was this: "Pride! If a man is proud and is not sociable with his neighbours; if he boasts, saying: 'I am someone, and others are not people at all,' then we say he is a witch." And if ever the cows fall sick or go dry, then we point to him as the witch who is throttling them and drive him away. This happens without dreams, too."

"And then again, if one man has quarrelled with another and the other falls sick, they may say the one is a witch and drive him out. Perhaps if he was a man of Mwaipopo he goes to live in Mwangomo's country (that of a neighbouring chief). Then one day a man of Mwaipopo's goes to his new village and talks to the people: "I see that you have received so and so here. We drove him out as a witch. He's a great witch, that man." And so when next the cows fall sick or someone dies, they point to him as a witch and drive him away again. Then he goes right up to Mwangoka's (twenty-five miles away) and again someone from Mwaipopo's or Mwangomo's comes up there and repeats the story. A little later the same thing happens and he is driven out again."

19. THINGS WHICH ARE SAID TO ANGER THE
WITCHES AND MAKE THEM THROTTLE US

Mwaisumo (clerk):

'Carrying very heavy loads, frequently. They (the witches) wonder (ukukiba) at a person and he (or she) falls ill.'

'Hoing a very large field, surpassing others.'

'Being more wealthy, as by earning money on the Lupa, like Bingibamo and Kiputa.'

'Boasting at work, saying: "I am the senior" like Ramsay and Isiah at Tukuyu.'

'Eating fine food alone. This may be meat, when you have killed a bull or cow, or beer or gifts of food from in-laws, or any other fine food. Mwambuputa was accused of doing this.'

'People are always afraid to carry very heavy things because they think that others will be angry and wonder at it (ukukiba). Their astonishment causes illness. Women especially speak of this a great deal when they are fetching firewood. If they carry a very big load others express wonder saying: "It is God who has given you strength surpassing us all." This astonishment brings on serious illness. People fall ill and some even die. Formerly people feared very much to speak to someone who carried a heavy load, saying: "You carry a very heavy load"; they were likely to be fined if they did, because the person to whom they said it would complain, saying: "He wondered at me. He brings down illness on me; he brings the witches by saying I am a strong fellow."

'It is like this also in hoeing; if a man has hoed much he fears lest they (the witches) will kill him; if people say: "He has surpassed us in strength" and are angry, that is what happens—the man falls ill and may die.

'Surpassing others in possessions is said also to anger other people, witches, who kill their fellow because they think that he has a medicine (unkota) which enables him to surpass them in wealth. The medicine for surpassing others is the medicine of good fortune (unkota gwa lusako). There was a case like this among the Nyangomo—the case of a young man who died quite recently. His name was Bingibamo, the son of Kiputa. This young man was in employment on the Lupa gold-fields . . . and he sent back money to his father to buy cattle. When he had been working for a certain European for a short time

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only he surpassed the other workers as they searched for gold, and found a very big nugget. He saw it first and picked it up immediately. All the others wished to share it; they all went together to their European (employer) to say that their fellow did not find this nugget alone, but that they had all got it. The employer said: "Yes, of course I shall pay you all for sifting, but he found it. He picked it up. I shall give him something separately." So he gave Bingibamo 100s. and to each of the others he gave 6s. The next morning Bingibamo was ill; the following day he died and they buried him. It is said that his fellows "ate" him, they were angry about the nugget he had got. And those who work there (on the Lupa) regularly say that no one who gets a nugget ever escapes; those who get money always die.

'It is said that one who boasts at work saying that he has surpassed his fellows in wisdom and seniority dies like Ramsay, who was a clerk at Tukuyu, and Isiah Mwagomba. They died. Some say privately that the sin (*inongwa*) which killed them was boasting—they boasted very much to their fellows. Some say that there is one man among them (the clerks at Tukuyu) who always kills his fellows if they seem likely to surpass him in seniority (i.e. importance). A boastful man (*gwakwitufyo*) is always proud (*gwamatingo*), and as for enjoying the company of his fellows he does not keep on good terms with them at all (*atikwangala nabo kanunu*).

'Eating fine food alone is said to kill a man. If you have killed a bull to eat you must give your fellows some, because if you grudge them they will summon the witches to "eat" you. That is to say the people who saw you will tell of it and at night "the defenders" will be angry and summon the witches to "eat" you. Or when your in-laws bring something when they visit you, and you do not call your fellows, but grudge them a share they will "eat" you, as happened in the case of Mwambuputa. It is said that Mwambuputa grudged his fellows certain food, so they were very angry and two of his children died at home. When he found that sickness was spreading at his homestead he fled to the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde), but there also he found that death pursued him and he returned home again. It is said that sickness pursued him to the plain because he went off without performing the death ritual for the children who died. So when he returned he found two bulls and killed them, saying: "Friends, I have come. I did wrong because I did not perform the ritual for your children with you."

20. THREATS OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaismo (clerk).

"It is said that some witches show themselves openly. When he is angry with his fellow a witch may say openly "*Uligwaki?*" (literally: "What are you?") and his fellow takes ill in the evening, sickness falls on him. Or one who makes love to a woman repeatedly and is refused by her, may say: "Woman, what are you? (*uligwaki?*) You are very proud, you fancy yourself, thinking that you are more beautiful than all others. Dance and show off—we shall see in what a pleasant fashion."

"It is now forbidden, as it was in the past, to swear at (*ukufinga*) a person without cause, saying: "What are you?" If someone speaks before others, and the person sworn at is quarrelsome, the man who swears is fined. The man sworn at will go to law, saying: "My fellow swears at men; I do not know what I have taken of his, he wants to make me ill by swearing at me." Sometimes, also, if he does not wish to be paid, he calls one before the court, or before neighbours to say: "This fellow of mine has sworn at me, if anything happens it is he who is responsible." Meaning that if he falls ill that evening it is this fellow who has caused the illness. And some, when they have recovered, make a case, saying: "It is this fellow", and bring him before the village headman accusing him. If he is found guilty he will pay perhaps a bull. Such tales are told, especially by our mothers, teaching us in childhood that it is forbidden to threaten a friend with witchcraft (*ukumfinga unnino bulosi*).¹ If you swear at your friend and he falls ill that evening then he will say it was you who swore at him.

"But there are some who wish to be feared and thought witches who constantly threaten people. Such a man says: "What are you? You may sleep or may not (*ulikagone*), I do not know!" but in great secrecy. Or perhaps sometimes he speaks, saying: "You! Leave me!" He knows that those who are there will tell (his enemy)"

Andambike (a young Christian man).

"Some boast of witchcraft, they praise themselves on account of knowledge, or food, or their homestead . . . saying that no one else has built so well; others praise themselves on account of their fields,

¹ *Ukufinga* means to swear to a statement. In this context it is better translated 'to threaten'.

754
626 and many things of that sort. . . . I once asked an elderly pagan if it were really true that witchcraft existed. The old man replied: "No, it does not exist, and the reason why I say that is this: Once a man hated his fellows and they were angry, and met at his place. (According to the pagan custom when your fellows are angry they gather at your home and they cut leaves; if you do not move you will die, or perhaps something will happen.) When they had met together at his place they said: 'Perhaps you may sleep or may not!' (implying you will not sleep on account of witchcraft.) When they had gone the man threw away all the leaves on which they had been sitting, the leaves which they say bring sickness to a home.¹ He slept, but those who talked about it said: 'He will not escape, for the custom which has been carried out against him is fatal.' He waited and slept again. The next day he was still well. Then I, for my part, understood that witchcraft does not exist, those men boasted, saying: 'Perhaps you may sleep or may not', but nothing happened. They just wished to frighten him. And one day I myself tried to frighten a certain man. His cow had eaten my seed so I went to his house and complained that his cow had got into my food. The next day again the cow ate my seed again. So then I was angry and said to myself, 'I'll frighten this fellow.' When I said: 'Why is your cow in my seed again?' he replied: 'I don't know. Do I herd?' So I said: 'My child, perhaps you may sleep or may not when you answer like that!'

"He said: 'Are you a witch then?'

"I said: 'You thought I was just talking. Know that I am talking to you here angry enough to wish to fight with you, so if you are strong in body you will overcome me at night in dreams.' And I went to tell a neighbour that my child perhaps might sleep, or might not, and not to be startled the next day if something happened to that child of mine. That night I blew a calabash trumpet that he should think I was coming and tremble. When he heard it he set off by night, saying:

¹ Mwaisumo commenting on this said: 'When, as boys, we went round in groups eating at one another's homes we were told by our mothers not to cut too many leaves, but just enough for us to use (to sit on). It's forbidden, they said, to strew leaves at a home. It looks as if there were something against the owners of the homestead, you foretell bad fortune, perhaps sickness or death. So, likewise, if I go to visit a sick friend that does not affect his recovery, but if I shed tears because he is sick men say: "It is forbidden (to weep), you foretell misfortune, perhaps he will die (because you weep)." And here (in the case recounted) the the leaves were a sign that this man had a case against him. Others wonder, asking: "What has happened, what has happened?" It is said that when people wonder something will happen on account of their astonishment. If they know that there is a ritual or a funeral all is well, but if nothing is known then questions are asked, something will happen because people wonder, that is people from other villages, not the neighbours of those who have a case against them.'

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

SELECT DOCUMENTS

233

'Wives, let us die from our own disease, not this one, pick up the pot and leave it with someone else immediately, we are leaving this home, he is not going to find anyone.' They hid the pot by night, and they moved. A child died after they had arrived at the place to which they moved.

"So I began to understand that witchcraft does not exist but that we die of fear. See, I am not a witch at all, I just tried to frighten that man, but their fear killed them. As for frightening people with witchcraft, we frighten them that they may respect us, or that we may get what we want to eat, they think that if they grudge us they will be throttled by witches."

'The old man who told me (Andambike) this is still alive, living in the country of Kilwa, MuNgonde, in Korosso's chiefdom.'

21. CHILDREN LEARNING OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaikambo (clerk).

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'I learned about witchcraft from the accounts related by the elder boys in our boys' village. There we tell about witchcraft; of how the witches fight with people of another village, of their way of travelling to where they commit witchcraft (*kwa kumanga*), that is flying. We tell how they eat people and that the strength of witchcraft is in pythons. And we speak of some who are dead, who each had a python, or perhaps four, and of village headmen who have protective pythons (*isota rya buketi*). We relate cases which always appear true, and make us afraid.'

[p. 234]

SELECT DOCUMENTS

239

they reply: "We are just walking about in our country, to our homes", and the owners of the country do not drive them away; but of a single man they ask: "Why are you walking about here?" and they drive him off.'

789
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'The breath of men' and witchcraft.
Mwambuputa (Senior village headman).

"The breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) and witchcraft (*ubuloni*) go together. If all the members of a village murmur that a certain man is evil then the words of the innocent (*abelu*) have no weight, no strength at all, but those of the heavy ones (*abasito*) have. It is the heavy ones who carry that breath into his body in dreams, they chastise him, but the innocent just talk and murmur against him, that is all.'

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Question: "Then that breath comes from the pythons inside them?"

Mwambuputa: 'Yes, that is where it comes from, it is one with witchcraft, identical. Sometimes they just chastised him a little, he did not die, but just fell sick; and in such a case there was never any drinking of *umwafi*; if he killed a beast for them they would pray (*ukwiputa*) and pray, they would let out all their anger, saying: "Certainly we were angry, it was us, but now it is all over." Then life came back to him and he recovered. That is the curse (*ikigune*).

'But sometimes they would kill him—and then they had to drink *umwafi* . . . if a man died and they found spear-marks, wounds, in his entrails the chief would get angry and say: "You have killed your fellow, drink the *umwafi*." So then the *umwafi* would convict one of witchcraft and he would be expelled from the country. For we said: "It is forbidden to kill a man." We others were afraid, although we had disliked the victim ourselves, we feared that at some later time the witch would kill us.'

24. PROCEDURE IN A WITCHCRAFT CASE
(TRADITIONAL)

Mwakionde (doctor, brother of a chief).

'The custom was that if a man was accused of witchcraft he always went to the chief and said: "They have accused me of witchcraft. Please give me witnesses." The chief would send off the man with his accuser and with witnesses to the doctor. If the accuser was proved wrong he had to pay four or five cows, or if he had no cows, a girl, and then after she had borne a child the accused would come to pay cows and be a relative in the end.

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'If the ordeal (*umwafi*) convicted both, neither vomiting, the chief would be angry and say: "You are both witches." Then each would pay four cows to the chief who would kill two from each of the four for his men to eat, and both men would move from the country. If both vomited the chief would say: "You are fools; be friendly," and the village headmen would say: "Yes, but the accuser must pay cows to the accused for accusing him."

'Men never went to drink the ordeal without first going to the chief. Sometimes the one convicted as a witch was speared and all his cows taken by the chief—none went to the accuser. If the accuser was caught and the accused vomited, four cows went to the accused, and the others to the chief because the accuser was himself a witch. Some who were great witches died of the ordeal.'

[683]

Mwaisumo (clerk).

'There was a nasty little chap (*kaliko akandu kamo*¹) who came from the hills to live at Bijilila, and who built next door to father. This chap was very poor; mother and the other villagers always gave him food. I remember the chap very well—he was very dirty in his person.

'Well, once there was complaint (*ukwijaja*) because the milk supply in the village was small. So this chap fortified himself within and said: "Do not go on complaining, sons of Kihabia, I have seen the witch who is throttling the cows. It is Kimpunga! Catch her, and let her drink *umwafi*." Mother was astounded at being taken; she was dumb-founded at being "caught" for witchcraft, for in her lineage no one had ever been caught. So then she also said: "Indeed, my husbands,

¹ Mwaisumo speaks of him as a thing rather than a person.

254
627 take me to the ordeal, and let me drink (*umwafi*).” Mwankaje, my older brother next to me in age, went to drink the *umwafi*. He vomited immediately after he had drunk it. So that nasty little chap, Mwasulama, was defeated. He escaped paying a fine for he was so poor—they beat him a little with sticks. Had he been rich he would have paid mother a cow, for it was customary for one who had been accused of witchcraft but had vomited the *umwafi* to claim compensation for slander in court, and to be paid a cow.

‘Long ago when I was a child, when the AbaMpulo were young men, the homestead they built was very rich. Ngemela and Mwasalutaba, and Mwakinene, and Kyula, and Swita, and all the others built there. Swita was a witchfinder. He had power (*amanga*) to catch witches when they throttled the cows. He always went out to the pasture when he knew that there were people who wished to throttle the cows. On one occasion the cows in the village did not give milk. Everyone was called together to complain (*ukwijaja*), and Swita (Mwaitulo), the man who caught the throttlers of cows, was among them. When they were speaking he, Swita, fortified himself with medicines within and said: “Why are you complaining all of you? I, I have seen him who throttles the cows. Let us all come together again here to-morrow, and no one must stay behind.” So they all met together there. . . . Formerly it was the custom to call out names. They met together and one man who shouted the names stood a little distance off and the witchfinder who responded stood a little distance off, separately. The first man shouted the names and the witchfinder responded, saying: “Yes!” All the names were called out, but when they came to the name of Mwasalutaba the witchfinder was silent; the name was repeated and he was still silent; the third time the whole company groaned together. Mwasalutaba then said: “Friends, I am astonished, I am not a witch, I do not throttle the cows, so I ask for the ordeal.” So the witchfinder said: “Yes indeed, drink *umwafi*, and if it does not convict you then I will pay a cow.” So they went with him and told everything to a certain doctor who had built in the country of Mwambebile, in the hills. When they got to the doctor’s Mwasalutaba drank the *umwafi*. They addressed it, saying: “We think that our fellow throttles cows, but if we are wrong tell us, you medicine.” While they were yet speaking the sun went down, so they said: “The *umwafi* has caught our fellow.” They returned home, and they drove him away. His cattle escaped capture though it was the custom when someone was convicted of witchcraft for the chief to take his cattle, and if he chose, to kill for those of that village who were innocent to eat meat. But Mwasalutaba escaped—they only drove him out, for the village was not really his own village,

SELECT DOCUMENTS

243

he came from another side. And he has never moved back to the village, nor has he ever been accused again of witchcraft.

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'Swita really knows how to catch those who throttle cows for witchcraft. Here is another tale about it: One of the fellows of the AbaMpulo had begotten a child, and the child died. When they had done the autopsy "the owner of the child" said: "They (the witches) have eaten him", and he prepared to move. Then Swita began to speak in secret saying that the so and so's had killed the child. And they of whom he spoke did not come to persuade their fellow, who was preparing to move, to remain. When the chief heard that a man was preparing to move, and his fellows the so and so's did not come to persuade him to stay he called together the whole village, and was very angry with them. When he found that they all agreed he went to Ngemela (the village headman?) and said: "I think that it is they of whom Swita spoke who have killed the child, their cattle will be taken." Ngemela objected very much to taking their cattle, and the chief went to Ngemela's junior saying the same thing, that it was they (of whom Swita spoke) who had killed the child and he, the chief, would take their cattle. But Ngemela's junior also objected and reported to his senior Ngemela, who agreed that he did not wish to take anyone's cattle. The chief agreed, saying: "All right, I shall not take their cattle." But they, in their foolishness, when they heard that the chief had said that it was they who had killed the child of their fellow, and that he would take their cattle, themselves started the matter saying: "We want the ordeal." Their request was agreed to; they were given *umwafi* to drink, and addressed. But they were killing themselves. When they drank the *umwafi* convicted them; they did not vomit. When this happened and chief said: "See! It is as I thought, it is indeed they who killed the child." And he took their cattle and killed some, and people ate the meat. One cow which he took on account of this case is still there, I know it myself, we call it "Lya-kakata". Formerly when people were convicted of witchcraft their goods were taken, or they were driven from the village. This tale was told me by a man belonging to the country in which it happened.'

25. THE ORDEAL (*UMWAFI*)

Mwaisumo (clerk).

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‘I was once given *umwafi*. It was long ago but I remember it very well. It was at the funeral of my mother’s younger brother my *umwipwa unnandi*; he died suddenly, and when he was dead some people of the family said that the disease was from my father’s side (i.e. from my father’s younger brother, *tata unnandi*, my own father was dead at this time); and others said, no, it was from the side of the deceased’s new wife—this was his third wife, recently married—he had run away with her from her husband. Those concerned were the deceased’s sisters (and their husbands), brothers, wives, and fellow villagers. They said: “Let us drink *umwafi*.” So they took two children, I and another, a girl—she was a daughter of the dead man and represented his own house; if she did not vomit then the disease came from within the house (i.e. from one of the wives); I, in the same way, represented my father’s house.

‘The doctor took some banana leaves and prepared medicine, putting some into each leaf; after a little while they called us and told us to stand apart, a bit away from the house. First the doctor gave the *umwafi* to the girl from her leaf, and then to me from mine. The leaves are kept separate and there are several for each person. All the family drew closer and sat around us. The doctor addressed each of us in turn. I do not remember the words exactly, but it was something like this: “If it was you that has brought sickness, let us see. We are sure it was you that brought the disease.” Then we both vomited, she a little before me. If one does not vomit it may be very serious; the poison stays in you and you may die. Then they said: “Well, we do not know where the disease came from.” Then they gave us water to wash in and some meat to eat—food is specially put aside for those that drink *umwafi*. This was the end.

‘Afterwards it was said that it was the man who was the woman’s first husband who had poisoned my mother’s brother. We were being tested for sorcery, not witchcraft, as the autopsy had shown that it was a case of sorcery. Having heard this, we did not spread the news; we kept quiet, waited, and watched. And then after a week the dead man’s son, my cousin (*untani*), was dead; and that woman ran away. She was frightened. Then we knew it was her former husband who had killed both by sorcery.¹ The family sought the doctor to get

¹ In another text (quoted on p. 256) Mwaisumo explained that the injured husband had used ‘the horn’, i.e. vengeance magic. Being of the family which suffered Mwaisumo calls it ‘sorcery’.

the medicine for the prevention of the disease, and then it was finished. The wife was taken back by the first husband, so the disease could not kill us any more.

'When she went back to him he could not come to us again. (True, he had no reason to do so.) Nothing happened to him. It is not our custom to accuse such people to the chief; we do not exactly know if it is the man, and still we have taken his wife. We were all concerned in this because of my mother. It happened four years before my brother died; there were four years between my uncle's death and his. I was in Tukuyu during the influenza after the war—in 1918—and then I went to Selya the next year, 1919, and my uncle died.

'The procedure is similar in an accusation of witchcraft.'

Mwaikambo (clerk).

'*Umwafi* is always used when someone denies practising witchcraft or theft, or denies that he is a liar. When they¹ have "caught" their fellow in the village and say that it is he who is throttling their cows so that they do not get milk, and the accused man denies it, then they take him to drink *umwafi*. When they have come to the doctor's place they tell him their tale. Two men support the accused and two the accuser. They do not eat when they are going to drink *umwafi*. The doctor first says to the accused: "If you are really guilty of throttling the cows, don't trouble the *umwafi*, but confess." And he replies: "Had I been seen as a witch I would not have come here." And both his supporters say: "Our friend is falsely accused; he has never practised witchcraft."

'The doctor questions the accuser in the same way, saying: "Did you really see your fellow as a witch?" and he and his supporters reply that they saw him.

'So then the doctor gives them *umwafi* to drink. He sprinkles a little powder in tepid water; or sometimes (so they say) he sprinkles the *umwafi* on two freshly cut stumps of banana stem, one representing one side, and one the other. Then the stump in which the "new growth" (? sap: *ulufyogo*) first appears is the one that has "vomited". The "growth" appears the same day that they cut it. The doctor addresses the *umwafi* (*ikupangililaga*) and the others present assist, the supporters of each man addressing him. Then one vomits and those on his side trill, but he who has not vomited is very sad. Then they go home and he who has vomited pays the doctor.

'There is very little drinking of *umwafi* nowadays, but much divination (*ubulagus*).

¹ i.e. 'the defenders'. Mwaikambo explained, 'A witchcraft accusation always begins with "the defenders" seeing the witches in dreams.'

754 "There are some in our country who were caught for witchcraft, for
627 "eating" people and throttling cows. The name of one of them was
695 Sumali, but now he is dead; another is Mwaimama. They denied the
accusation very strongly; they were brought before the chief (my
father) for their case to be judged, and when he had given judgement
they said they wished to go to *umwafi*. So they went to the *umwafi*, and
when they had drunk it Sumali vomited and Mwaimama was con-
quered. Nothing happened to him—he was not driven out, they just
told him to stop doing such things—but continually, even now, he is
accused of witchcraft whenever anything happens. He's not gone to
umwafi again.

"This happened before I went to school, when I was still herding
cows, about 1925 or 1926. I did not see the trial (before the chief)
with my own eyes, but I was there when the *umwafi* was administered.

[763] "On another occasion a woman was "caught" for witchcraft when
her child died. When they do an autopsy they sometimes find wounds
on the right side or on the left. The right side is the side of the man, the
left that of the woman. This time they found them on the side of the
woman. The woman (i.e. the mother) denied that it was she who had
"eaten" the child so they went to *umwafi* and the woman was "con-
quered" (i.e. proved to be lying). It was not she, in her own person,
but a member of her lineage who had "eaten" the child. After the
umwafi had "spoken" they went to a diviner to discover exactly who
the individual was.

'I heard about this from others, but Mwasintobile, the father of the
child who died, is a man of our country—I know him.'

763 jumba coming close and looking, too. 'Come, Mwaijumba, look, so that another time you will know.' He did not give direct instruction—he was far too much worked up—but he insisted on the other coming to see what was being done and discussed.

At several points the doctor was clearly under the stress of emotion and reluctant to do more than was absolutely necessary—she had to be urged on by Mwantembe. 'Now,' Mwantembe said, 'let us dissect, mother! Let us look well. Let us dissect! Do you say it's a person? No, it's just a log, a piece of firewood!' And several times these words were used by Mwantembe and others to urge her on. 'Do you say it's a person? It's just a log!'

The doctor then pulled out all the contents of the stomach so that Mwantembe and the women could see up into the chest—there was nothing unusual there on either side; then we looked downwards into the loins and found something unusual—a round growth full of blood. I asked if it was a foetus but was told: 'No, it is not; we don't know what it is. We don't ordinarily find that. It is something evil (*lindo*, literally "rubbish"). We are afraid.' The growth was taken out, and also the upper intestine, for there was said to be something unusual about that too, and the liver and something else (*akanongo*). These, I think, are always removed. We were not told of anything unusual about them. The doctor herself made few or no suggestions—it was Mwantembe who did that—she just did the operation silently.

The stench was foul—several of the women put stoppers of banana leaf into both nostrils. Half-way through the woman at the head of the corpse got up, looking overwrought, and went away to a distance. The others said: 'It's all right, it's not a person, just a log' (i.e. there is no need for her to stay). At length the doctor pushed the rest of the organs back into the stomach and tied up the body with a cloth—another was tied over it to make all secure.

754 763 The discussion (which had been going on spasmodically all the time) broke out in a flood. People nodded to each other and said: 'Sorcery (*ubutege*)! Look! Look! Sorcery indeed!' The young man, Mwaijumba, told us: 'I dreamed of a medicine. When they were at the funeral [the dead woman had been taken ill while at a funeral at her classificatory father's homestead], before she fell ill, I dreamed in my sleep, I saw someone giving a child a banana, but I caught hold of the banana (all in my sleep). I broke it open and I found a powder there in the banana. So then I sent a message to her (the next day when I was awake), saying: "Come home. You have mourned sufficiently." And that very day I fell ill myself.' He told this with great excitement. Mwantembe also was obviously moved and said several times during the autopsy: 'I'm afraid. I'm afraid.'

Then Kakuju, the village headman, and Kissogata (an old man, a village headman of the previous generation) came to see the results of the autopsy—the things extracted. The doctor had made a small incision in the thing chiefly suspected—the round growth full of blood and measuring five or six inches in diameter. Kakuju got very excited and insisted on her making a bigger incision to see what was inside. 'Look well!' he shouted, 'You are our ordeal (*umwafi*). We know this illness which is killing people in the country. We know it. We know it (passionately). It's sorcery (*ubutege*), is it not?' Mwantembe then said: 'See, it is sorcery, see!' showing him all that had been extracted. Both Kakuju and Kissogata agreed and then Kissogata said: '*Igobe!*' At this word the tension seemed to relax. Kakuju jumped at it. 'Yes, yes (eagerly) *igobe*. Is it not *igobe*, Mwaipaja?' (passionately to me) '*Igobe*,' Mwantembe repeated. '*Igobe*,' shouted the women. Kakuju and Kissogata walked away talking. Then all the remains (i.e. the growth, etc.) and the bamboo knives were buried apart in the waste land, and the body was buried in the usual way.

Angombwike later explained that *igobe* was an old word for *ubutege* (sorcery).

Autopsy (ukupandula), witnessed by G. W., 23/3/37.

Funeral of little granddaughter of Mwaihojo (a chief)—daughter of Mwaihojo's son Mwakisile—aged one year. Child died last night. Funeral at Mwaihojo's homestead.

The doctor, a woman, cut the stomach open crosswise and pulled out the contents of the stomach. 'See that little black thing, branching!' They looked all over thoroughly, up and down. 'Look carefully, people of Selya!' said the doctor. 'You tell lies! You will go and tell lies! Look carefully! See, there is no *ikitasya* (a disease).' All agreed that there was no sign of *ikitasya*, but no positive opinion was expressed till two men had been fetched to look. They came and said: 'Why do you deny it? Why do you not know the disease from ropes (*engoje*)?' 'Yes,' replied the women, 'but we said we should let the men look first.' Before the men came and gave utterance to the word *engoje*, the women had, I think, come to the same conclusion; it was clear from the way the doctor pointed out 'the little black thing, branching' that she was certain what it meant, and they nodded in an understanding way. Only when she asked them: 'Look, what is it?' they would not answer, saying: 'We don't know, you are a doctor who understands these things.' Then, instead of saying what she thought, she asked: 'Aren't the men coming to look?'

The men came back to Mwaihojo and repeated: 'It is the disease

27. WIVES DRIVEN AWAY FOR WITCHCRAFT

Makwelebeja (elderly commoner).

'Many wives are driven away for witchcraft. They are driven away by their husbands. If a man has several wives one may be bad and throttle her husband's cattle, or throttle her husband himself. Then the man goes and complains (*ukwijaja*), saying: "They have destroyed my cattle", or perhaps, "My neighbours have 'eaten' me", whichever it is. When his fellows hear his complaints they say: "Do not accuse outsiders. See! It's your wife." Some women are bad and the husband does not sleep when he is with his other wives; only when he is with her (the witch) does he have a good sleep. She spoils the fertility of her co-wives. Or sometimes all the wives are friendly and agree to spoil the cattle of their husband.

'There is a woman named Kajonga whose husband drove her away for witchcraft because she bewitched the fertility of her co-wives. A long time after her divorce she was married to another man, Mwitoba by name. From that man also she was driven away for witchcraft, but what wrong she had done was not much known. Some time later she died.

'Women who are driven away for witchcraft always remarry; they do not run off with men.'

Njobakosa.

'When a wife was accused she drank *umtoafi*. If she was "caught" by the ordeal sometimes her husband drove her away, sometimes he did not. Usually he did not.'

Nsusa.

'Formerly wives were frequently driven away for witchcraft. Such a wife remarried quickly.'

28. FEAR OF HEREDITARY WITCHCRAFT

Mwaisumo (clerk).

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582 "There are some people who, though they wish to marry a certain woman, fear to do so because the mother or father of the girl is a witch. They are afraid to marry because she is the child of a witch. And sometimes a girl loves a particular young man very much, but if his father is repeatedly accused of witchcraft her parents refuse to allow the marriage, because the young man's father is a witch. Such was the case of a certain young man, in the country of Mwaijande, who loved a particular girl very much. Her father was said to be a witch (*undoni*) a maker of wild animals;¹ he was said especially to make leopards. The parents of the young man objected very much to his marrying this girl whose father was a witch, the mother of the young man objected even more than her husband, saying: "No! She is a witch; witches always go in the lineage (*ikiholo*), and she will also be a witch when she grows up and comes to the house" (i.e. her husband's house). The father of the young man and the father of the girl were next-door neighbours, their homesteads adjoined. The matter was only spoken of in whispers, but I heard about it because the brother-in-law of the young man (the husband of his full sister) was my friend, and he told me about it.

"And again, a certain man who was always said to be a witch made love to a woman who was a widow, the husband who had married her having died. They agreed together that they should marry. When the parents of the woman heard they objected very much, saying: "That man is a witch." The woman was not yet old—she was quite young. Her husband had died but there was no one to inherit her. So then she refused the man (who had made love to her) saying: "I do not love you." Her parents argued against the marriage, saying: "We do not like it" and they persuaded her to leave the man, saying: "You know yourself that when he beats you you will think, 'I am married to a witch'." For she was grown up and her parents could not compel her if she loved him, though if she had been a child they would have been able to object and compel her to do what they wished. But she (though she was grown up) followed the advice of her parents and left him and refused to marry him.

¹ There was some doubt whether this man should be classed as a witch or a sorcerer. In this text Mwaisumo refers to him as *undoni*, but elsewhere he was spoken of as a sorcerer (*vide supra*, pp. 124, 152).

'And again, a long time ago, my brother Mwamoto went to betroth a girl at the place of that man who was a witch. Mwanama objected very much to his younger brother's action, saying: "You should not marry at that man's place, everyone says he is a witch." But Mwamoto paid no attention to any of them—others also tried to persuade him not to marry the child of a witch. He married her and she is with him now, as his wife.

'People fear witchcraft in a husband or wife lest he or she bring witchcraft into the house, and they have children who become witches when they grow up. As I explained witchcraft runs in a lineage (*ikiholo*). It is especially women who object to their children marrying or being married by a witch, it is they (the women) who forbid the children, and their husbands also object. I remember once that a certain man came to make love to my sister. The mother of this man was spoken of as a witch, and my mother objected very much, saying: "Do not desire this young man's cattle, I do not like him even though you do. His mother's witchcraft is much spoken about." He had come to betroth the girl when she was still very young. The others agreed to what my mother said and refused the young man, saying: "We have not got a child yet (ready for marriage), she of whom you speak must first grow up."

In reply to questions Mwaisumo explained that people fear to marry witches lest their children be witches and be driven from country to country. 'We say it is bad to be driven out. A man is never driven out because of the witchcraft of his wife—he used to divorce her if it were proved—but a girl's parents will refuse to give their daughter in marriage to a young man from a family of witches because if he is convicted of witchcraft she will be driven out with him.'

We were also told of a young Christian who had been refused by a number of women. It was whispered that this was because his father was a sorcerer. Later on, however, he married and the talk died down.

29. CHRISTIAN SCEPTICISM OF WITCHCRAFT

Nsangulufu (Christian Elder, an early convert).

754 'At first when we repented, the missionaries asked us whether we
797 believed in witchcraft, and we said: "Yes, there is witchcraft", and
763 we told them about it and the wounds found in the bellies of people
who have been killed by witchcraft. So the missionaries said to us:
"When there is a death tell us, and we shall go and look." I was taken
once by Klaus (a missionary) to a death. I was afraid to go near the
corpse—everyone was afraid—but the missionary stood over the
grave and looked at the corpse and even put his hand inside (the
stomach). The person was said to have died of *igobe* (a kind of sor-
cery), but Klaus said he had died of a disease of the chest. He told
people to come and look. Mwaipopo (the chief) was there but he
refused to come and look; they all refused. After some time I came
and Klaus showed me. In this way we have been and examined
corpses, and we have never seen the wounds of witchcraft. . . . Klaus
used to go round to funerals, examining corpses. . . . Ndabele here has
seen a corpse which the pagans said had a python. Last week Ndabele
went to a funeral near Itete and the pagans said there was a python
inside; the woman (who had died) had been a witch. He said: "Let's
see the python, let's see it", but no one could show it to him.'

[p. 254]

30. SORCERY

Mwakionde (doctor, brother of a chief).

'When they open a dead person and find the intestines red, black and white in different parts, they say the death is due to sorcery (*ubutege*). They go to the doctor and get medicine for the relatives.

'Sorcery comes very quickly, especially when they have done an autopsy. Then the one who takes the body in her arms, and the one who buries after the operation, die very quickly. If the body has been opened the disease spreads very quickly. In one case thirty people died, mostly relatives. In another case, a wife, a girl child, a mother, a father's sister, and a son-in-law (husband of the girl child) all died. The wife died one day, next day the girl child and her mother, then the father's sister, then the husband of the girl. Autopsies were performed on the first three.'

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[p. 255]

31. DEATHS ATTRIBUTED TO 'THE HORN'

Mwaisumo (clerk).

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683 'My mother's brother died from the sorcery (*ubutege*) of Mwakaliku the younger. His death came about in this way: He had run off with a woman whose name I have forgotten now, and the "owner" of the woman continually stirred "the horn" that all those concerned should die, if they did not return his wife. Almost immediately my uncle fell ill and died; shortly afterwards the child of his elder brother, Mwakando, fell ill and died three days later. Then we understood that it was this woman who brought the illness, for her husband boasted to people that it was he who had killed members of our family. We drove away the woman in order to end the sickness among us. Perhaps if we had not sent her away the illness would have spread and killed many of us and our wives also.'

[p. 256]

32. PROCEDURE IN WITCHCRAFT CASES (MODERN)

Nsusa (village headman).

Question: 'How do you manage about witchcraft cases nowadays?' 754

'We judge them openly but we do not have them written in the court book. When "a defender" has seen his fellow throttle someone, he tells us, and we judge that witch. It is "the defenders" (*abamanga*) who see the witches. Perhaps "the defender" comes out of his house by night and calls out: "I see so and so throttling so and so! Listen to-morrow." 627

'Yes, that happens nowadays.

'When someone tells us in this way we agree; the witch is driven out. Yes, even though he denies it, we say: "You are a witch. You are a thief. Even though you do not admit it, get out of the country." But formerly they went to the ordeal.'

Question: 'Now you just accept the word of the defender?'

'Yes, formerly if a man denied guilt when he was accused he went to the ordeal, and the *umwafi* "caught" the witch. Now since the Europeans have forbidden the use of *umwafi* we accept the word of "the defenders". Look, they (the defenders) see witches. Yes, in dreams.' [695]

Question: 'What about the man who accused the wife of Mwako-bela?'

'He denied it. He said: "I did not see her", so on that account we said: "Since you have slandered her you must pay thirty shillings." But had he really seen her and told us properly we would have overcome the woman in argument and divorced her from her husband, but he denied it, saying: "I did not see her", and we all said: "The woman is not a witch; who has seen her?"

'If a woman is divorced for witchcraft there is no fine, the husband gets back his cows, that is all.'

Question: 'And the friend of Mwambuputa?'

'He was really a witch. They said: "You, Mwambuputa, we will convict you of witchcraft yourself if you are friendly with him."

'And if a man is fined because he has accused his fellow of witchcraft without seeing him, really, we do not write that in the book either.

'No, *umwafi* is not used; the Europeans and the chiefs and the village headmen have strictly forbidden it.'

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From the Records of the First Class Subordinate Court of Rungwe

Criminal case, 11/1935.

Heard 5/3/35 before P. M. Huggins.

L. Rouquette, prosecuting.

Rex v. Musa, son of Hassani.

Charge: 'By actions and statement representing himself to have power of witchcraft and supplying instruments of witchcraft (green leaves) to one Mwakalobo, son of Mwakalobo.'

Charge read and explained.

Accused pleaded not guilty.

Mwakalobo, headman¹ of Kapya, a pagan (complainant).

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'About two months ago a man called Bakowike came to me at Ikapu, stating that he had been sent by the accused to warn me that there was a conspiracy to bewitch me, on the part of one Mwakagiri and Mwakatum-bula, because I was supposed to have taken some of the former's country. I told Bakowike to tell the accused to come and tell his own tale. The accused came that same day at about sundown. We entered the house and then he called me outside to talk to me. Prior to doing this he told me that Mwakagiri had given him four cows to arrange my death as the former stated that I was in possession of his land. He said that if I gave him a cow he would take no action. I did so. He also gave me some ground-up green leaves which he instructed me to mix with water and drink. He alleged that this potion would render me immune from witchcraft.

'The accused went off with the cow. Kikomile (X), Kyongalala (Y), and Mahandi (Z) and three of my wives were present during the above conversation.

'About a week later Mwakagiri came to visit me—I had sent for him. I did not welcome him—I told him I had heard that he was after my life. He asked me who had said this and I indicated the accused. He then told me that the accused had made the same statements about me to him. I then came and reported to the D.O. I threw away the medicine that the accused had given me. Relations have recently been strained between Mwakagiri and myself.'

In reply to question by accused: 'Yes, I sent for you but only because you sent Bakowike to me first to warn me.'

First witness, a brother of the complainant, confirmed his story, having been present when both Bakowike and the accused came to the complainant. He added these points:

¹ Probably a minor chief (*umafyale*), not a village headman (*ulifimu*). The report of the case was in English.

SELECT DOCUMENTS

259

'Mwakagiri wished to kill Mwakalobo over a land dispute and sub-chief Mwakatumbula also desired to do so, as he did not obey orders. Mwakalobo said he would not drink the powder (given by the accused) except in the presence of all his sons. . . . Bakowike was known to me, he lives at Isagula in Mwakatumbula's country, and Mwakalobo is married to two of his sisters.'

Second witness, Mwangambo, a classificatory brother of Mwakalobo, entirely confirmed Mwakalobo and the first witness. He also was present when both Bakowike and the accused came. Also, he said:

'I was present subsequently when Mwakalobo sent for Mwakagiri. Both of them stated in conversation that the accused had informed them that each had designs on the life of the other.'

In reply to a question by the accused: 'You did not spend the night with us, nor did you drink beer; there was none. We didn't drink the medicines.'

In reply to a question by the court: 'Yes, Bakowike came back again with the accused.'

A henchman ('*capitao*') of Mwakalobo confirmed the above stories.

Bakowike confirmed the other stories. He said: 'The accused and Mwakyangile with whom the accused lived (Mwakyangile is also a doctor) came and told me that Mwakagiri had come and informed the accused that he wanted to kill Mwakalobo, and had given him four cows for the purpose. He asked me if I was a relative of Mwakalobo's. I told him that I was; then he advised me to go and warn him, which I did that day. Mwakalobo then told me to fetch Musa (the accused). I called him and Mwakyangile the same evening.'

In reply to a question by the accused: 'I did not come to your house. I did not give you a goat in exchange for medicine for my wife.'

In reply to a question by the court: 'I had never heard of Musa before. He lives across a stream about one and a quarter miles away.'

In reply to a question by the accused: 'We did not sleep at Mwakalobo's.'

Note by the court: Impression that this witness had previously met the accused, probably buying medicine from him as stated by the accused, but is afraid of acknowledging the association.

Mwakagiri: 'It is true that Mwakalobo and I have had a dispute about land. I have never met Mwakalobo on any occasion on which we have accused each other of invoking witchcraft against each other, but on various occasions Mwangambo (the second witness) was sent by Mwakalobo to inquire why I was bewitching him. I told Mwangambo I was doing nothing of the sort. This was about a month ago. No one else was present. I did not learn how Mwakalobo came to suspect me.'

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695 I have often met the accused; he came and took a wife from my country. The accused is a doctor. I do not know why Mwakalobo should say that I met him. It is a lie.'

Mwakalobo was called. He said: 'Mwangambo (the second witness) is a nephew of Mwakagiri. I sent him to call Mwakagiri. He came back the same day with Mwakagiri and Nyomilela.'

Mwangambo when recalled confirmed this, adding: 'I live under Mwakalobo.'

Nyomilela: 'I know of no meeting of Mwakalobo and Mwakagiri. They were disputing over land. I heard from Mwakagiri that his nephew Mwangambo had told him that Mwakalobo accused him of exercising witchcraft against him. I am no relative of either party. I never went with Mwakagiri to meet Mwakalobo.'

Note of the court: I am of the impression that Mwakagiri and Nyomilela are hiding something. Their evidence is not given in straightforward manner.

Accused (Musa): 'I have never received four cows from Mwakagiri. True, I went to Mwakalobo's house. He called me to prescribe for his impotency. He paid me with a cow. I was surprised at this as it is not customary to receive payment till a cure is effected.'

In reply to a question by the court: 'No one approached me with a view to exercising malignant witchcraft. I do not know why I should have been dragged into this. Perhaps Mwakalobo heard I had gone to Mwakagiri's country. I only went there to see my father-in-law. I gave Mwakalobo medicine to cure his impotency. I warned him that it would be no use for his trouble, but he insisted on having it. Yes, he even insisted on giving me the cow as a pledge of friendship. I did not know why he was so positive and wanted to be friendly with me. This is the first gift of that nature that I have received. I have been three months in Isangulu. I am on my way to my home at Mwaya. I stopped at Isangula because I was suffering from a boil. All my relatives live in Sangu country.'

In reply to a question by the prosecution: 'I was myself surprised that as a resident of three months' standing I should have been suspected by Mwakalobo of witchcraft.'

In reply to a question by the court: 'Mwakyangile was present with me at Mwakalobo's. I went to call him.'

Note by the court: There is no question that this evidence is given glibly, and carries no conviction. The demeanour of the accused is that of a man seeking for a way out of a trying situation.

Mwakyangile told a different story from Musa. 'Mwakalobo wanted treatment for his children, who were suffering from *ikitarya* (a disease). He wanted nothing for himself.'

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

SELECT DOCUMENTS

261

In reply to a question of the court: 'He did not complain of impotence.' 754

In reply to a question by the accused: 'We did not discuss bewitching anybody.' 695

Order

'There is in my opinion no doubt that the accused is guilty of practising witchcraft for reward, and is causing fear and annoyance. Section 5 of the Witchcraft Ordinance virtually prohibits any effective and rapid steps being taken to combat witchcraft. Section 5 (i) necessitates the delay of trial by High Court, and the offence disclosed is not covered by it, whereas Section 5 (2) necessitates obtaining from His Excellency the Governor both sanction to prosecute and confirmation of any sentence imposed. Under the circumstances, and in view of the delay that has already taken place, permission is granted by the police to withdraw their request for sanction to prosecute under Section J (2).

'By virtue of the powers conferred on me by Section 8 cap. 21, Musa, son of Hassani, is ordered to reside at Mwaya and to report once a month at the District Office, pending such decision as the Provincial Commissioner shall make, following a request that he should exercise the powers conferred on him by Section 8 (3) to order Musa, son of Hassani, to reside in his own domicile, Usangu.'

The Provincial Commissioner agreed to the request and Musa is now in Sangu country. 696

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"You're making love to my wife", and the man who made the accusation was from the family of the chief. On account of this, they said: "The chief is driving us out. Let us move." All three moved because of this case and are building here. Of the three friends who were supposed to be seducing the minor chief's wife, one had been found at night-time in the suspected woman's hut, and had been fined 12s. for "making love to the woman" though they had not been found together.'

Record of G. W., 20/4/35 (from various informants).

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'The chief Mwaipopo was sick, and living "in the forest", i.e. in a recently settled and cultivated area at a distance from the main population of his chiefdom. Nsusa, one of the headmen of his classificatory son and heir Mwankuga (cf. p. 183) went to see him. On his return Nsusa said to Mwankuga: "Mwaipopo told me that you, Mwankuga, were poisoning him. Mwkanyamale (a doctor) says that your doctors are in the hills, you went to fetch them there." Then Mwankuga went to his father Mwaipopo and asked him: "Is it true that you are accusing me of working sorcery against you? Do you say so yourself?"

'Mwaipopo said: "Who told you of this Mwankuga?"

'Mwankuga: "Nsusa told me."

'Mwaipopo: "It was Nsusa who told me that you were working sorcery against me! Go and ask him about it, and have it out with him."

'So Mwankuga took the case to Mwakisisy (another chief) for arbitration.

'Mwakisisya said: "Nsusa is in the wrong and must pay a cow to his chief Mwankuga."

Nsusa refused.

'So Mwakisisya said: "All right, we shall go to those who know about the case", and he came with all his men to Mwenanganga, Mwaipopo's senior village headman (i.e. the representative of Mwan-sambe, *vide* p. 181). There a witness gave evidence, saying: "I was with Mwankuga when Nsusa told him that Mwaipopo accused him of sorcery." Nsusa denied it.

'Mwakisisya said: "I, Mwakisisya, I have finished, Nsusa must pay a cow."

'Nsusa still refused.

'Mwankuga: "Your honour the judge, and others. I have cows, I shall not ask for his cow, but let him leave my country and build elsewhere."

'Nsusa replied that he was hoeing near Mwaipopo in the forest, and

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

SELECT DOCUMENTS

269

sleeping there, and he refused to move. Then Nsusa wrote a letter (he begged a sheet of paper from the clerk of the court and got a Christian, Mbokigwe, to write for him) and sent it to Tukuyu (i.e. to the District Officer.) All the village headmen were very angry.

'Then one of Nsusa's cows fell into a crater-lake and was drowned. An autopsy was done and "wounds" were found in the animal's stomach. It was said that it had been killed by witchcraft. Nsusa moved to Mbambo, because, he said, "They are killing my cows". Then Mwaipopo fetched him to build in the forest. Nsusa replied that he would prefer to go home, and Mwaipopo agreed, but said he must first pay two cows. "I," said Mwaipopo, "am satisfied, but your friends there are angry, you have done wrong to Mwankuga; you can go if you pay two cows." Nsusa refused and got angry and wrote to Tukuyu again, saying: "Mwaipopo never comes to Court. He spends all his time drinking in the forest, and I, Nsusa, have judged all the cases myself in Court. Now that I am away from Court the cases are not judged; all is silent."

'The clerks at Tukuyu recognized that the stamp and the handwriting were not those of the court clerk, so they wrote to Mwaipopo. He was angry and imprisoned Nsusa for three months. The District Officer advised Mwaipopo not to let Nsusa return to his country, so when he came out of prison Nsusa built in the country of Mwangomo. This was a year or so ago, and the day before yesterday the village headmen went to fetch him. He is here, sleeping in the house of Kasisi, in Igembe. Eight men went to fetch Nsusa, carrying his household stuff and driving back the cattle. (We saw them.) 'Yes, Mwaipopo must have agreed, for if a chief drives away a man no commoner can take the initiative in fetching him back.'

'Nsusa killed a bull and also provided two pots of beer, one for the men of Igembe and one for the men of Lugombo. His own village was Lugombo, together with Itiki (cf. p. 183). He killed the bull at the house of Kasisi where he is staying. He has not yet been given a homestead.'

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765 the lives and enter the dreams of their kinsmen; but the nature of
775 their survival is uncertain.

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A man, when he dies, is believed to join his ancestors. Until the end of the funeral rites, they say, he is on the way and if the ritual is not properly performed he does not reach them, but troubles the dreams and lives of the survivors until he is properly driven away. 'If you do not perform the ritual for your father or mother you may go mad or else have a slow and lingering death.'

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Many of the younger pagans, however, are affected by Christian belief. Young men spoke confidently of going after death 'to a fine country with dancing and feasting and a chief to rule us'. But many old men scoff at such beliefs. 'They have learnt them from the missionaries—how do they know, have they been there to see?' Among some of the younger men also the ritual of death is less important than it used to be. As one Christian said: 'The pagans no longer fear to die away from home—they used to fear very much to die in a strange country (and many still do), they thought: "If I die far from home I shall never reach my ancestors, for people will not bury me properly." Nor do all the young men now fear if they fail to attend a father's funeral ritual.' 'We no longer believe in the old rituals,' said a sophisticated young pagan, 'because we see that the Christians do not do these things and nothing happens to them.'

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An additional reason for fearing death is the Nyakyusa belief in the contagious character of many diseases. Death is thought to be caused sometimes by witchcraft, and sometimes by one of a variety of diseases. Of these diseases some are held to be hereditary and to run in families, and they are usually non-contagious; others, and they are usually contagious, are believed to be due to the sorcery of enemies. And the contagion is thought to be spread by an autopsy. It is especially dangerous to relatives; other people do not fear these diseases unless they actually hold the corpse in their arms, or dig the grave, or help to bury it, but all relatives are afraid.

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Besides the contagion of specific diseases, the corpse itself is held always to have a vaguely defined, but none the less fearful, contagion of its own. And, because of this, all who have had any close contact with the body go to bathe immediately after the burial. Those of the chief mourners who hold the body in their arms, the grave-diggers and those who get down into the grave to bury it, all go to bathe. 'Even when death is no due to a contagious disease

764 wealth of the family in cattle and the number of its affines. There
556 is a direct relationship between the number of cattle killed and the
number of people who come to a burial. On one occasion we were
told: 'There are not many people here because there is little meat;
they only killed one bull!' And this connection can be observed at
any burial; hundreds of people come to mourn the rich, only a few
to mourn the poor. And if no meat is killed there is usually no
dancing at all. But once a crowd has gathered it is in itself an
inducement to others to come. When men were dancing the funeral
dance in the rain a neighbour commented: 'They will say there is
no rain for many women are present.' We have seen a crowd of
2,000 or more at a funeral, with 100 men dancing at once.

The meat is divided among the chief, the relatives, the neigh-
bours, and the non-relatives from a distance. To the chief of the
country is given the breast and ribs of one beast: 'This is to honour
him.' To each affine who brings a beast a whole leg is returned to
be eaten. To the various groups of non-relatives from other chief-
doms is given sometimes a side, sometimes a leg, and the rest of
the meat is divided between the relatives and neighbours who have
come from the same or adjoining villages. At large funerals, where
many cows are killed and where people gather from all the villages
of the chiefdom, a portion of the meat is presented to each of the
various village headmen to eat with his men; at smaller funerals
the division is made less formally.

'A man's very own cow, that of his lineage, is eaten by the people
of the country, not the relatives, because the people [non-relatives]
always looked at it thinking: "It's ours."' A picture of ghoulish
expectation? That indeed is an element of Nyakyusa thought.
While we were in the country a number of chiefs forbade the
[754] offering of funeral meat to non-relatives, for, it was believed,
gluttonous neighbours sometimes killed a man by witchcraft¹ in
order to feast at his funeral.

The kinsmen of the dead man gain prestige from a lavish
funeral. They are compelled to sacrifice by fear lest the anger of
the shades, or the 'breath' of their neighbours, should bring
misfortune upon them, and they are rewarded by the admiration
of men when they do so.

764 Social pressure is not always exerted upon the members of the
626 dead man's family to provide cattle themselves. If he left sufficient
cattle to sustain the family dignity they only kill from his own

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 93.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

FAREWELL TO THE DEAD

not die. That comes from the shades when they are angry and say: 'We shall see!' It is to be finished off.

QUESTION: So the shades always come at death?

MWANDISI: Yes. See, Mwafyuma who died [the old Mwafyuma, a classificatory brother of Mwandisi, died the day before yesterday]. I dreamed at night of Mwakalukwa [a classificatory son of Mwandisi who died about 1932] and in the morning I told X here [his son-in-law who lives near was sitting with us and at once assented, 'Yes, he told me'] that I had dreamed of Mwakalukwa, and there were many deaths in the country—the people of Kisale were mourning and the people of Ndemba and that Mwakalukwa had said to me: 'Where are we dead to care for those who come?' And I said to X: 'If someone comes from Mwaya you will see that someone has died.' That very day my son here [Pugana his son was sitting near] came and said: 'Mwafyuma has died.'

This dream of Mwandisi's was cited as a proof that the shades come to receive a man at death. They came to Mwandisi in a dream—the shade of Mwakalukwa came, which he took to mean that the death was to be in Mwakalukwa's country, not Mwakalinga's.

QUESTION: You said the shades come to receive a man killed by witches. Have they no power to drive away witches?

MWANDISI: No, the shades have not the power to drive away the witches but Kyala drives them away.

QUESTION: Kyala? You mean the headman of the village!

MWANDISI: Yes, the headman drives them off, Kyala gave him the power (or duty).

iii. Evidence of other informants

KISSOULE: We begin by burying the flowering head of an *ilitoki* banana—that is a person—then we rub forehead, elbow, and knee in the earth there and go to bathe. We push away the earth, that means our business above here (in the world of the living) is finished, we have really buried you, do not come here above, go to your place (below), in the world of the shades.

MWAILAPE (a Christian): They throw the stem of bananas into the water and the bark and feathers, but if it is a fowl and the bark is good, they take them back and they belong to the officiant. Throwing away the stem of bananas means: 'We are driving you (the shade) away. Be off!' The millet which is tossed in the faces of the participants is also thrown away in the water. Tossing it in their faces means: 'This is your food which you cultivated, go away with it.'

MWAKISHILE AND OTHERS: The touching of the ground is the ex-

- 783 KASITILE: You sons of Musika had a case against you . . . you fought.
764 HALF-BROTHER: But that case concerned a woman.

A discussion of the case followed.

KASITILE: Friend, we pray here. Listen carefully.

HALF-BROTHER: I have spoken and not concealed anything.

KASITILE: That's what I say, let us pray well.

HALF-BROTHER: I performed the ritual for him. Let him die with his hair.

SISTER: Let us confess [lit. vomit] we were angry.

HALF-BROTHER: Yes, it is so, we were angry. The cow made us angry.

- 783 Mwaisumo described a treatment with *imbosyo* medicines which differed slightly from the one we saw and involved the slaughter of a sheep; according to his account the medicines are coiled in the pot like ropes, and the participants are washed under a waterfall, though they are not made to vomit like the relatives of a murderer. Doubtless the details vary with the officiant, but the principle that medicines are used to rot the ropes remains constant.

● 754(c) *Protection against sorcery or vengeance magic*

- 789 Sickness caused by sorcery or vengeance magic is believed to
783 spread among kinsmen in much the same way as sickness due to the shedding of blood or binding with ropes, and the ritual performed as a protection against it is very similar to the ritual for 'rotting the ropes' just described. We saw it performed after the death of E. who died on 23 March 1935. Her elder brother (heir to her father) and her husband, who were pagans, wished to perform an autopsy, but her younger brother, a Christian, prevented their doing so. Soon after her burial her mother and husband fell very ill and three weeks later (April 13) the five-year-old son of her elder brother M. died. An autopsy was performed on the child and the diagnosis was that his mother's father, after quarrelling with M., his son-in-law, had drunk medicines to bring death to M's children. M. explained: 'My wife has already buried two
[763] children. This boy is the third. Previously we found evidence of *ilyepa*¹ at the autopsy, and this time it is the same. The disease
ooo comes from my wife's father.' However, when M. went to confirm

¹ *Ilyepa* is a medicine alleged to be drunk by a senior relative, when he is angry, which, if his anger is justified, will cause his junior relatives to suffer in his own person or that of his children.

However, when M. ^{RITUALS OF MISFORTUNE} went to confirm

177

the cause of both deaths with a famous diviner, Sambo, he was told that the boy's death was due to the anger of neighbours who had not been feasted as they should have been, but E's death was due to the sorcery of her first husband. M's report of the divinations is worth quoting: 787
754●

I have just been to Sambo in the country of Swebi, he has divined and he tells me that the death of E. was due to the sorcery (*ubutege*) of Mwakyusa, her first husband. He also told me the name of the doctor from whom Mwakyusa got the medicine to kill her, the man is K.; he is both a doctor and a smith in the country of X. He told me that Mwakyusa was angry because, when he tore her mouth, he paid to us a cow in damages; he said: 'I have paid the cow, I should have my wife. But they have taken her back and eaten my cow.' E. had left all her things in his house, her bark-cloths, her cloths, everything. Sambo tells me that Mwakyusa took all these things to K. and spoke four names, saying: 'I wish E. my wife, M., and one of M's wives [mother of the dead child] to die. If these die I shall be happy.' So the doctor prepared a medicine which he put into a calabash. He did this while saying the names, and he addressed the names to the cloths, as if one of them was E., one was me, and so on. If E. had left nothing behind he would have had to send a man up with medicine to our place.

He told me to go to Mwakionde, who is a great doctor. Mwakionde will come to my place and cook medicine, we shall all drink it, not only the three people named but all my distant relatives will collect to drink it, N., E's second husband will come too. About the child, Sambo denies that it is *ilyepa*, he says it is due to the wrong-doing of her father. At first my wife was married when very young, but her husband went away and left her, she never lived with him. So when she grew up she said: 'I am tired of being alone, I am going to get married.' So she came to me. I paid five cows to Mwandosia (the chief) who is the mother's brother of her father. Her own father is dead. She has a father by inheritance, but Mwandosia had looked after her a great deal, so I sent the cattle to him, and he sent them on to the elder brother of her first husband. But her father's heir said: 'That finishes the cows to be paid to her husband, but I want one for myself to make six.' Well, at first I was involved in a lawsuit and did not bring the cow, so her father was angry; he came and took her back home; then after a time I found the cow and took it to him, and he sent her back to me, but he did not, as the custom is, cook food for my friends of the village. He should have cooked some chickens and brewed some beer, so that my friends would be happy and say 'Thank you'. So now my friends are angry, they say: 'Why does he not bring his daughter back properly? Perhaps he is not her father!' The breath comes from my friends, they 783

783 are angry because of food. If I had not given him the cow it would have been his anger, now it is that of my friends. At the other deaths the doctors diagnosed *ilyepa*, but Sambo denies this. It is just the offence to my neighbours. He says I am to send the woman to him, and he will put her right himself.

A month after E's death (April 25) Mwakionde, the doctor, came to her elder brother's home to perform the ritual of protection. He and her second husband were next-door neighbours. The preparation and drinking of medicines was at her brother's homestead, but they moved to her husband's (where she was buried) to treat the grave. Beer had been prepared and the doctor added medicine to it. The mother of E., and one of her brother's wives, ground millet from their own crop, letting it fall on freshly-cut leaves of the sweet banana. This millet was used for the medicine. Meantime, one of the doctor's assistants opened the grave, digging down until he reached the cave in which the corpse had been placed. Then medicine to cause rotting (*imbosyo*), made with the lees of the beer, was poured in and eight pots of water. Mwakionde explained that 'opening the grave is to rot the poison in the body' and the water is put in that it may reach the corpse—the amount depends on the depth of the grave. Then the grave was filled in again and three small lengths of root, anointed with red pigment, were stuck into the fresh earth. These, Mwakionde said, were 'to close the way so that if the medicine comes again it will be turned back'. 'All three pieces of root are to close the way so that if that man comes again to work sorcery we shall escape, if Kyala keeps us.'

Then the doctor prepared a pot with about twenty roots, two varieties of spiny cactus, one impaled on the other, six packets of medicine, and water, and set it to boil on a fire made near the doorway of her brother's hut. The fire was lighted by friction by the male kinsmen, and the old fire was cleared out of the hut. A small bull was killed and its blood added to the brew. Porridge was made from this and the specially ground millet, and eaten by the participants. Then each of them, beginning with her elder brother, was scarified on the back, arms, legs, and feet and medicine from a horn rubbed in.

783 All through Mwakionde spoke only of *protection*, but others,
754 speaking of the rite of filling the grave with water, explained it as a means of making the sorcery recoil on the sender, causing his death, and there is little doubt that this was one object of the

ritual, though not openly admitted. The younger brother pro-⁷⁸³
tested at the inclusion of the cactus stems and it is likely that they ⁷⁵⁴●
were an ingredient intended to injure the sender of sorcery.

(d) *Prayer to the shades*

Misfortune is also believed to come from the anger of senior⁵⁷⁸
relatives, living and dead. If a junior has angered his senior kins-⁷⁷⁵
man the senior is said to 'mutter over the fire'. 'He is so angry⁷⁵⁴
that he cannot speak intelligible words, he murmurs and mumbles
to himself. . . . 'I crouch over the fire in the evening and mutter
to myself in a low voice: "I am astonished and hurt at my son.
Did I not provide marriage-cattle for him? And he does this to
me!" ' Then the shades hear him and the wrong-doer falls ill, or
is sterile, or his crops or fishing fail. 'No man has the power of
making the shades hear like this save Father (*tala*)—he mutters
alone and the shades hear him—all of us, pagans and Christians
alike, believe in the power of Father to mutter, because whenever
a man wrongs his father something always happens to him—he
finds blessing nowhere.' The 'father' is a man's own father who
begot him, or his heir, or, in a lesser degree, his father's elder full
brother, or any kinsman who has given marriage-cattle on his
behalf. 'If a man has given me cattle for marriage then he has
authority over me (*jo mpala gwangu*)¹ for cattle are important
(*imbala*).'

If a senior is at fault (for example, an heir who neglects his
wards) the shades may, in theory, punish him also, but more often
any misfortune that befalls him is attributed to the just wrath of
his neighbours who watch over the interests of the dead man's
children. The idea that misfortunes spring from the anger of the
living is strong; indeed, one of our best informants, Angombwike,
maintained that 'the shades never act alone', and Mwakwelebeja,
an old man, said: 'It is really we who get angry, but the shades
help a little because they are always with us; we always dream of
them.'

The shades are 'the fathers' (*batata*), and prayers are addressed⁷⁷⁵
primarily to the men of the lineage, but a father's sister is also⁷⁸²
classed as a 'father'. Some informants denied that a mother could
bring sickness on her children:

Women never murmur against their children, only the father, the⁷⁵⁴
⁷⁷⁵

¹ Literally, 'he is my great one'.

754 man. Women murmur but it only makes them sick themselves
775 [laughter]. But my father's sister (*unnasenga*) can murmur, she is a man
like my father. . . . If my mother is old and I do not care for her she
will murmur and fall sick herself, she will never make me sick. My
mother is no relative in my homestead, she is no relative to the shades.

However, Mwakwelebeja (a very old and conservative man) held
that 'People sometimes say: "My mother beneath is angry"
though it's not common', and Kasitile was quite positive that a
mother was also a shade with power to inflict misfortune, as the
following conversation shows:

QUESTION: What shades influence a man or woman?

KASITILE AND HIS YOUNGEST WIFE: *Imindu* of father is there, and
imindu of mother. Yes, indeed, *imindu* of mother exists. Once I had not
put beer in the house and I fell ill. The divination said: 'It is *imindu* of
your mother. She is angry not to find anything in your house.' Because
we chiefs always put beer in a little calabash in the house, it stays there
always.

QUESTION: When it goes bad?

KASITILE: We put some more. There is a little millet flour there now.
Sometimes we put flour, sometimes beer. And when I come to die they
bury beer with me. . . . Once the offering was not there, and my mother
who was dead came to look and did not find anything. Then she went
to father, who was dead, and said: 'I went to our child. His house was
without anything.' Then father said: 'Let us go and look!' They did
not find anything, then they shook me up. Then the oracle said: 'It is
the *imindu* of your mother.'

QUESTION: And a wife?

KASITILE: Both her father and her mother punish [lit. hit] her at
their place, even though she is with me, also they punish her.

QUESTION: But your shades?

KASITILE: How can they punish in-laws? They do not punish her,
but the child whom she has borne, their grandchild, him they punish.

[593] Though Kasitile and others denied that the husband's shades
could punish a wife, nevertheless she suffers from their anger
through the child, through a difficult labour, or through the beer
she brews going bad.

578 PYAGILAMO: It is said that when a woman who has quarrelled with
775 her husband is brewing beer and it goes bad, that means the shades are
angry. The shades of the husband have made the beer go bad. The
husband has murmured and the shades have heard. When a wife is
pregnant it is taboo for her to quarrel with her husband; she will have
[845] a difficult labour. The husband murmurs and the shades hear. The

593 send the son into his father's house. He walks through the whole house
789 and the mothers acclaim him. This is the sign to show everybody that
783 he has entered his father's house. The women call the *akalulu*. They are
rejoicing because he has entered.

There are, however, some who do not return to their fathers. They
remain strangers [*abandu* as opposed to *abakamu*] until their death.
There is a young man at my home who took his father's wife. Where he
fled to no one knows because he is still in hiding. His father separated
from him altogether.

[753] A son must always bring something and the father must collect his
friends. If they just agree with one another and people do not eat any-
thing, then the son will not be settled in well. He will be ill. They say
that the illness comes from the shades. If the father is angry he mutters
(*ikwibunzisa*) and they hear. At first the people are not angry, but later
on, when they have heard from the father about the matter, they also
are angry. It is as if they help the father to mutter. Their shades are not
there, only those of the father's lineage, but his shades have regard to
the people. If the people do not eat anything and are not present, they
are not satisfied even though the father is satisfied. The father prays to
his shades alone in the evening with water in his mouth, and they pour
out beer on the hearth-bricks.

764 KASTILE: If a rich commoner has died and the heir buries him with
556 only one cow, the shades and people are angry with the heir, breath
783 falls on his body; perhaps he falls ill, or perhaps his child falls ill. But
they do not meet; people, the witches, are angry and the shades are
angry; the shades because they have buried him with only one cow,
people because they have not eaten meat, but the shades and people
are independent of each other. The oracle says: 'The shades are angry,'
it does not speak of people. It knows that people also are angry, but it
speaks only of the shades. And when he makes amends he prays in the
evening; the next day he calls people and kills a cow and he throws the
ija mmaps meat in the banana grove and says: 'Here it is, Father,' and
people say: 'Indeed, he did wrong, his father was angry.' But they do
not confess, saying: 'We were angry.' No, they say: 'The shades were
angry.'

754 Another type of case is that in which 'the breath of men' is
763 believed to have fallen on an infant because of its mother's dis-
respectful behaviour towards her husband's parents or husband's
father's sister. When a child is thin and ailing with *ingoto*, the cure
is for the mother to confess to the doctor who comes to treat the
child all the rude things she has said, and provide beer (exception-
ally a bull) to offer to her injured parents-in-law. They drink the
beer with their neighbours and wish her well. Ambilikile's wife

cited a case she had seen in which the doctor smeared the child with medicine and beer, and the mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law of the erring woman drank the beer and said: 'All right.' T. (a Christian woman) quoted another case:

One of my mother's co-wives swore at her mother-in-law. . . . When she bore a child it was very thin and ill, so they sought a doctor, and beat the mother and she confessed all she had said in swearing at my grandmother, her mother-in-law. She and the child were treated by the doctor and when her father saw that the child did not recover quickly he brought a cow in payment . . . it is still at my home. From that time the child recovered. If anyone says there is no such thing as the illness of *ingoto* they lie because I have seen it with my own eyes.¹

When a junior comes to beg pardon of a senior it is the business of the latter's neighbours to persuade him to receive the prodigal. That was indicated in Mwaikambo's account quoted above and reaffirmed by Mwakwelebeja who cited the case of his wife's father, a youngest brother, who had run off with three of his eldest brother's widows allocated to the middle brother, after they had been smeared with ash and the heir had slept with them.

When they had performed the death ritual and finished it and the widows had slept with the heir in the house and had taken the *ilibalaga* to their fathers, . . . then three of the widows ran off with the younger brother. He fled with them to Masoko and to the hills, where he lived a long time and begot children with them. Then later on he brought 'the cow of the ashes (*inambe ja mfuwandelo*)' to return to his senior brother. The senior received it and killed it and poured out beer. We ate.

QUESTION: Do people not refuse to receive such a cow, sometimes?

MWAKWELEBEJA: No, they fear to do so, they fear people, because the wrongdoer has come to them and it is they, the neighbours, who tell the senior kinsman: 'He has come, forgive him.' If the senior refuses they will be angry with him. Also we tell him: 'See, that man has strength to beget children with these women, you will eat the cattle.' Then he agrees and says: 'Let us make friends.'

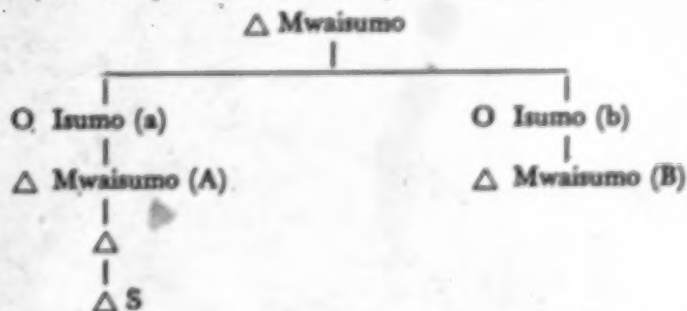
The illness that falls on a widow who rejects the heir after being smeared with the ash is 'like a curse from the ash'. Her lover, 'if he is strong and has medicines he will escape, but if he is not strong he will fall ill . . . because he takes men's lips with him [i.e. suffers from their breath].'

¹ A third case, in which the beer was brought to the woman's husband, is quoted in *Good Company*, p. 296.

THE PARTICIPANTS

sister immediately older than herself, the sister's daughter, and the sister immediately younger than herself, took part.

At the ritual of spearing, the principals are the children and grandchildren of the slayer and the slain, their brothers, their mother's kin (*abipua*) and their wives. We were not able to watch any case of treatment against *ulukwe* and are not certain exactly how far the infection is thought to spread. Our informants were agreed that the number of kinsmen concerned is less than in a twin ritual; but we traced one case in which a minor chief, Mwaisumo (B.), forbade the father of a man who had killed S., the great grandson of Mwaisumo's mother's sister, to enter his country lest he spread disease among his relatives.



At a ritual to 'rot the ropes' those concerned are the descendants of the one who has been bound and their wives, siblings and siblings' children. At the one ritual we saw there were present 27 members of the dead man's own lineage (3 sons, 2 younger half-brothers, 1 full sister, 4 half-sisters, 3 sons, 5 daughters, 2 grandsons, 7 granddaughters), one wife, the wives of 4 sons, one father's sister's son, one son and 6 daughters of his sisters or half-sisters.

The ritual for protection against sorcery which we attended was performed at the home of the senior brother (heir to his father) of the dead woman. There were present her two brothers, their wives and children; her father's brother's daughter; two wives and one daughter of her sister's sons; her mother, two of her mother's brothers with their wives and children; two of her mother's sisters and the daughters of one of them. Her husband (who lived next door) could not take the medicine at his in-law's house, but some was sent for him to use at his home with his wives and kinsfolk.

In the simple ritual of prayer to the shades the senior kinsman who offers the prayer and blows out water acts alone but, if there

577 There is much more talk among the Nyakyusa of misfortune
777 from the shades or the anger of neighbours, than of blessing, but
556 there is an idea, somewhat vague but real, that generosity and
kindliness will bring blessing (*ulusajo*). Ambilikile, a Christian
teacher who had grown up in a pagan home, said:

My mother tells me that my father was in the habit of feeding people, those who were not his relatives. People went to a distance and brought medicines for fertility and gave them to him, hence they said: 'He is very kind; food never grows short at his home.' She also told me that my father died very old. He did not die of disease, but of old age, no breath being left in him. This was because men were always saying: 'May they stand by him, may they bless him (*bammizemeleze, bansajeye*),' not to his face but to others. They said that he lived long because of the blessing of men. Yes, they say that the food of a kindly man never gets finished, that of a stingy man finishes; he himself suffers hunger.

763 Mwaisumo described a father on his death-bed blessing a favourite son, allocating cattle to him, and telling him:

Care for the children I have left, keep on good terms with them, then you will be rich in everything like your father. I cared for my children, I was not harsh (*akali*), so complain to me of anything that troubles you. If you are like this the property in your home will be plentiful, people will be astonished and say: 'He is like his father.'

431 Of a man given a cow by the chief, it was sometimes said: 'The
775 shades have blessed him; he has a righteous (*ngolofu*) shade.'

754 Although our Nyakyusa informants talked a great deal about
673 the danger of neglecting rituals and angering senior relatives,
621 living and dead, the number of cases of misfortune attributed to their anger is small in comparison with the number attributed to witchcraft or 'the breath of men'. (Ten as compared with sixty-three.) There is no reason to suppose that one type of case was concealed when the others were reported to us, and it is clear that the Nyakyusa prefer to make neighbours in the age-village, rather than kinsmen, the scapegoat for their misfortunes. Even when the wrong done is against a kinsman it is often the neighbours, rather than the shades, who are said to have brought punishment on the wrong-doer.

777 At the same time, we were assured by one informant after an-
621 other that people blame the shades or Kyala for misfortune when it is really the neighbours who are responsible! Angombwike argued that men fear to accuse the neighbours, who are slow to

SELECT RECORDS

259
761
578

that he has killed, they are astonished and say: 'He should have called us. Does he perform ritual alone?'

QUESTION: But why were those beneath angry in the first place? They are not angry without cause.

LUKUSYILA: Indeed, they are never angry without cause. There is always some wrong. But we do not know what it is in this case. If you do not kill cattle for your father's burial they are always angry. But we do not know what wrong Katasya committed to make them angry.

Late Mwanifu came in. He told me that Katasya is still alive, but perhaps he will die this evening. We do not speak with him. He is just breathing. We only ask his wives: 'Does he sleep?' The case is thus: the millet failed in his field and he said: 'I shall pray to my shades and it will grow again.' Then he went to a certain man to get his big bull and gave him a cow in calf, saying: 'Take this and give me your bull,' and later they will give him a little calf worth 30s. The bull was very big. He killed it. Before he did so he was already slightly ill, but when he had killed it the illness became very much worse. We say they have bewitched him because he stinted his fellows in the village. But they themselves deny it, saying: 'But we always kill and eat ourselves alone. I, Mwainyopolela, killed my animal and ate it alone. Have I died therefore? According to the custom, if I have killed my beast as a sacrifice (*jakwiputela*) then I give my fellows one leg.'

QUESTION: Did Katasya not do so?

MWANIFU: No, Katasya did not give them any. He ate alone. Some wise men give the chief the breast because the chief is the owner of the country. Katasya did not give him that. Yes, if someone dies then the chief is usually given the breast. But when a beast is killed for sacrifice, no one having died, then many eat by themselves. The mourner gives to the chief.

QUESTION: Did he inquire of a diviner or not?

MWANIFU: We do not know. Some inquire of a diviner. Some think for themselves that the fathers are shaking them. Concerning his death, we are only speculating, saying: 'Perhaps they have bewitched him. They were angry on account of the meat.' But perhaps it is sorcery. See, he was sweating very much on his face. Let him die. We will look in his belly. Perhaps he has been speared. They have bewitched him. Perhaps it is sorcery. We only speculate.

In the morning Mwaipopo (the chief) was very, very angry. He said: 'Why have you gathered together, you people? Go off home. Do you want to finish off a dying man? It is taboo to gather together. First let a man die, then come to lament the death.'

QUESTION: Is it a Nyakyusa custom to be angry if people gather together at a sick man's house? Is it as if they bewitch him?

MWANIFU: Yes.

763 QUESTION: Why the gathering?

MWANIFU: We were startled to hear that he had died. They raised the lament of death in the morning and his cattle went home when Kasitile and I were on the pasture land. We were startled to see Katasya's cattle going home and said: 'He has died.' But his relatives saw that he had not died. They said it is taboo to lament when someone is still alive.

QUESTION: Why do cows come home when a man dies?

764 556 MWANIFU: It is a form of mourning. They should also weep and say farewell. He had property. For if I, Mwanifu, die, though I do not have cattle myself, yet because I am the son of Mwaipopo cattle are killed at the funeral. It is impressive. But if I were a commoner and had no cattle, then the funeral would be a flop. There would be no meat and people would say: 'He has not yet died, he has left one head.' They count the cattle to kill. If an important commoner dies, one who has cattle, then his funeral is impressive. People dance at his homestead and say: 'Our fellow, who has died, was a strong man who danced the war-dance in the homesteads.' And if he was tough in disputes, if he always got the better of them and no one ever got his cow, then they say: 'A tough fellow has died. May he leave a son as tough as himself. He died with his toughness.' They praise him.

782 QUESTION: Tell me about the killing of Katasya's bull.

MWANIFU: He killed the bull without telling his neighbours, but when he poured out the beer he called Mwainyopolela and Kapuguso and two others. There were four. He had built in Busikali village in which there are ten homesteads, but, customarily, we do not call all the neighbours, only those who are nearest. Only if I have killed a full-grown beast do I call them all and give them a leg. Yes, it was a big bull and perhaps it is on account of that that they are angry. When they came they were startled, saying: 'They are drinking beer! And there is meat lying outside!' They entered and drank a little. Then Katasya divided the meat for his relatives and took his own. He gave to Mwainyopolela and his fellows three ribs. Then M. said to his three fellows: 'Let us go home. I will not take this little piece of meat.' So they all went away. The other three ate the meat, only M. did not.

QUESTION: So they were angry?

754 767 MWANIFU: Perhaps! We say sometimes: 'They were angry and ate him.' But perhaps it was sorcery, because just now three snakes entered the house of his chief wife—the *inlesi* snakes. One entered and they killed it. Another entered and they killed it. Then they caught the third to take to a doctor, the son of Mwakanyamale. The doctor said: 'This snake is sorcery,' and he will find a medicine to give them to drink that the illness may be slight. But he has not yet done

SELECT RECORDS

261

QUESTION: When he says it is sorcery, does he mean that the snakes have been sent by someone? 754 ●

MWANIFU: Yes, Mwaipaja (G. W.), you understand.

5/1/38

Katasya died during the night. I came to the burial with the doctor, Mwakanamale, meeting Mwamalunda on the road. They told me that the son, Mwakanjwike, had fled from the funeral. 'It is said that he had made love to three of his father's wives. They all fled, the three women and the young man. Yes, they will take them to a waterfall to cleanse them.' 764

I sat by Mwaipopo, the chief. There was a dispute about the autopsy. Kasitile came to the chief to say: 'They are refusing to examine him.' 'Why are they refusing? There is much illness about. Let us examine him and know.' Mwaipopo spoke with heat. Then a relative came and told him: 'Katasya said: "Do not examine me when I die."' Mwaipopo: 'Why? There is that case of the son (incestuous adultery) or perhaps it is sorcery, or perhaps, if the neighbours refuse to examine him, it is a confession that they have bewitched him. Let us examine him. It will trouble us later on. Also, he was praying to the shades, saying: "The millet failed." Then he died! Let us examine him and know.' 763

Five cows and a bull were killed. About twenty cattle were standing in the herd. The corpse was carried around with wailing and drumming and the cattle were driven round also. Then followed the autopsy. I went with Mwanyoso, with Kasitile's relative, Mwakasenga, and with the brother of the dead man. A woman doctor performed it with a bamboo knife. Another woman kept a hand on the head of the dead man meanwhile. 'You brave ones!' was the comment of the other women, two or three of whom stood watching. The doctor hesitated, as if in fear, before the first cut. Mwanyoso encouraged her: 'Go ahead!' As she pulled out the bowels we all crowded round to look. Mwanyoso said: 'Ropes,' but no one else took this up, and he did not mention it again. They looked into the chest and found something wrong. 'He is burned within! It is sorcery!' 764 763

MWANYOSO: We chiefs do not fear the commoners, we look for wounds and speak if they are there. But there are none. Look well! If he had been speared there would be much blood, and wounds. But he is burned within. They have worked sorcery against him with Mwang-wala. That is the name of the medicine which some Nyakyusa plant. It's sorcery! Then is that of the country (i.e. witchcraft) not there? [824]

It is not there.

How about the son?

That we do not find. He just has diarrhoea.

Mwanyoso then told Mwaipopo (the chief): 'We have examined him, it is sorcery.'

763 As we came away various people stopped us and asked: 'Have you examined him?' 'Yes, it is sorcery.' Great interest was shown by all in the cause of death.

764 When we first arrived, we found the son a little distance from the funeral and he did not, so far as I know, come near at all. He did not go near the grave when the corpse was buried. I asked Kasitile about bathing at the waterfall. 'They will wash him to-night. Katasya died in the afternoon. At night the son and three women fled. They will wash them at night.'

6/1/38

Kasitile came in to see us at breakfast time. I asked why the son of Katasya had not come near the burial though they had bathed him at the waterfall.

KASITILE: It is forbidden, but they have made a mistake. They have washed him irregularly. According to custom they should first have buried the dead, then, on the evening after the burial, they take them to the waterfall to wash them. When they come from washing, then the son takes a torch of burning grass, he throws it down on the grave, and jumps over the grave. Then they say: 'Let him strike the cattle.' He kills one of his own because he does not eat of those which they have killed previously. This is what they did yesterday afternoon, so it is finished now.

QUESTION: What does it symbolize?

KASITILE: It means it is I who overstepped you.

QUESTION: And when he steps over the grave and the fire?

KASITILE: It is the fire which the women kindled for him who has died.

QUESTION: Do they know who worked sorcery against him?

578 KASITILE: Yes, it is the son of Mwaikilaja whose name is Mwamuking-
754 kinga, because when their father, Mwakyandwike, died, the elder brother, Katasya, was a child, and the son of the second wife, Mwaikilaja, inherited. But when Katasya grew up they refused to be on good terms with him and quarrelled with him. But they never worked sorcery against each other. So then when Mwaikilaja died, his sons inherited. Katasya lost the inheritance because they said: 'You are not on good terms with your kinsmen. Let the sons inherit.' So he said: 'I, Katasya, agree.' But later on he was on good terms with those sons of his brother. There were three of them. But the eldest and the youngest quarrelled. The youngest, Mwamuking, worked sorcery against the eldest, so Katasya told them: 'Do not be friendly with Mwamuking who is working sorcery against you. Let him be at a distance.' Then Mwamuking was angry and said: 'Is that wretched elder (*ikulu eli*) never going to die?' and he worked sorcery against him. This is the case.

SELECT RECORDS

MWAKYANDWIKE ▲ = ○ (1)

KATASYA ▲

MWAKANJWIKE △

= ○ (2)

MWAIKILAJA ▲

A ▲ B ▲ MWAMUKINGA △

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Mwaikilaja, the son of the junior wife, inherited, because when their father, Mwakyandwike, died, Katasya, the son of the senior wife, was a child. Mwamukinga is accused of killing Katasya by sorcery.

Mwakwelebeja came in to take me to the funeral of Katasya. 'It is not the day of burial to-day, but the day of war. On the day of burial they weep very much and it does not go well (*jikanoga*) but to-day it will be well performed.' He was eager and excited at the prospect of good dancing. 'The chief Mwabuga from Masoko, his son-in-law, is coming. He is coming with his drums. The people of Masoko dance well.' At first I refused to go, but he would take no refusal. 'You must come,' he insisted, so finally I went. 764

On the way we discussed the cause of death. Some say the witches have eaten him. They say that Mwainyopolela is angry on account of the meat. Some say it is the sorcery of Mwaihojo (the chief) because Katasya (a man of Chief Mwaipopo) hoed a big area in the disputed ground. He built a temporary hut and lived there. But we say no. If they had roused up a war between the witches, would they not have gone to Mwakagile (Chief Mwaipopo) and his fellows? But we have not done that. We argue and say: 'Why are you taking our country?' but we are only fighting with words. 761

QUESTION: The war of the witches?

MWAKWELEBEJA: Yes, the war when they call the witches of a chiefdom by night to fight against those of another chiefdom. But Katasya was indeed wrong to stint his neighbours in Busikali of meat. If he had been wise he would have given them a leg. Mwainyopolela is very generous. Always when he kills a beast he shares the meat with his fellows. 754
721
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We arrived at the funeral. The women were packed together under a tree to the left, where they had sat with the corpse yesterday. The girls and young women stood watching the dance and occasionally strolling rhythmically out into the midst of it. The errant son was with the other men to-day. The son-in-law from Masoko came with all his cattle (seven cows, one bull and five calves) of which one will be killed and the others returned. The bull was unusually large with an enormous hump and it caused comment. It was well known. They told each other how, when his father, Mwakabulwa, died, this bull was quiescent. It did not move about at all, and it was a very small calf. It was quiescent 764

764 and sniffed at the grave. When this son-in-law arrived, the chief women mourners got up from under the tree and went with him into the hut to wail. They came out all wailing. The women under the tree were wailing all the time with a leader standing up in the middle. But the wailing was drowned by the drums of which there were three sets.

764 Three young men were got up with white clay spots and some had
535 bells on their ankles and loin-cloths. They held spears, and danced and
302 leapt wildly. 'What', I asked Kasitile, 'is the meaning of the white clay?'

KASITILE: It is war paint. During war we painted ourselves with white clay formerly. Then if I saw one with white clay I did not spear him. It was my comrade. But he whom I saw without it was an enemy and I speared him. It was the sign.

725 QUESTION: But did the other side not use it?

KASITILE: We took them by surprise.

Mwanyoso came to visit me in the evening.

764 QUESTION: And what steps are they taking about Katsaya's death
789 from sorcery?

MWANYOSO: They sought the doctor, Mwangolombe, for the burial yesterday. He pounded a medicine and burnt it on the grave. Then they buried the dead man and danced on the grave. That means they destroyed the sorcery. The dead man should take it away with him.

QUESTION: And has the doctor given them medicines to drink?

MWANYOSO: He has not yet done so. They will fetch him again to cook the medicine at the home.

QUESTION: What about the payment?

759 MWANYOSO: For yesterday they did not pay anything, now, but when they have fetched him to their home, then they will pay some shillings. But if many people have died, then they fetch a famous doctor such as Mwakionde. Then he comes with all the protective medicines (*amapingo*) and treats them. Then such a doctor gets a cow. The famous doctors in this country are Mwakionde and Kapuguso and Mwakanyamale.

787 QUESTION: Will they consult an oracle?

MWANYOSO: Why should they consult an oracle? They know what it is. It is the sorcery of their brothers!

●754 QUESTION: But it might be the sorcery of another. Some say of Mwaihojo (the chief).

MWANYOSO: They are liars. See, Katsaya had just come from his brothers. He got the illness at their place. It is they. If it was from Mwaihojo and his people, they would have speared him by night. We would have found wounds and much blood, but we did not find them.

QUESTION: He came from his brothers?

MWANYOSO: Yes, there was a ritual because their father, Mwaikilaja, had died. Their senior brother inherited and he also died. Katsaya

SELECT RECORDS

265

went to catch the junior brother who was there, but from that time he has been ill. 754

QUESTION: Did Mwamukinga (the sorcerer) come to the funeral and did they give him meat? 754
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MWANYOSO: Yes, he came.

QUESTION: Is he not ashamed? Do people agree that they have worked sorcery against someone?

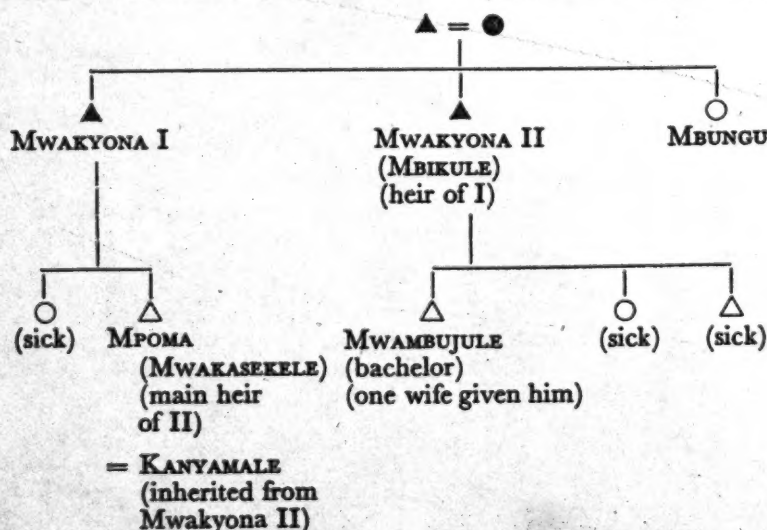
MWANYOSO: They deny it.

QUESTION: Did they give him meat?

MWANYOSO: Yes, they gave it to him.

(b) *Sickness in the lineage of Mwakyona*

The following case also illustrates how several possible causes of misfortune were considered—sorcery between kinsmen who were quarrelling over inheritance, the anger of the shades, and the jealousy of neighbours were mentioned. It shows, further, how expression of goodwill by those thought to be injuring a man is necessary for his recovery. The doctor treating the patient made the kinsmen confess their anger and gave them a medicine guaranteed to kill anyone working sorcery. 753



MWAIKAMBO: When Mwakyona died, his younger brother, Mwakyona the younger, whom they call Mbikule, inherited. But Mbikule also died, so they sought Mwakionde (the doctor and brother of the chief) and they asked him: 'To whom shall we give the inheritance?' The village elders, their fathers—those of the house—and their father's sisters, were those who saw to the matter of the inheritance. Then 428

428 Mwakionde let Mpoma (Mwakasekele) take the inheritance because he is the eldest. Mwakionde said: 'Let him be their father.' But when they gave the inheritance to Mpoma, they talked to one another and said that Mwambujule should take one wife because he did not have any wife. He was a bachelor. So they gave him one wife, but four wives of the father were inherited by Mpoma. After a little time Mwambujule said: 'My fellow has made a mistake with the property and he has not given me anything.' So he strove to attract the mothers. He said: 428 578 'Come to me and let me inherit you myself.' The mothers agreed, they ran away and came to his place. Mpoma was angry and went to Mwakionde to tell him that Mwambujule had attracted the mothers and taken them to his house. Mwakionde said: 'Do not make a case.' The village headman went to Mwambujule to admonish him together with the mothers. Then he returned them to Mpoma.

754 Later on, illness appeared. The sister of Mpoma fell ill. They gave 787 her medicines to drink and she recovered. Then the brother of Mwambujule fell ill and the doctors said it was sorcery (*ubutege*), that is, Mwakionde thinks it is sorcery. This is also a common rumour. But, as will be seen later, the diviners, when appealed to, said: 'Mindu,' that is, the shades.

755 When Mwakionde saw the sick man, he called together all of them 754 that they might grumble (*bijumane*) and drive away the illness, because it is said that when people pray (*ukwiputa*) the sickness from sorcery gets less. It is said if one has worked sorcery against his fellow he always hides himself, he does not appear at his friend's home, because, if he appears, if he comes and says: 'I am sorry for the illness (*ndaga ububine*),' even without praying at all, the illness disappears. Also, if a sick man has died, he does not go or he will die soon. It is said that the dead rise. Yes, it is the same in the case of witchcraft. Then also they say that if someone has 'eaten' his fellow he does not go to him, he hides himself at his own home, and if his fellow has died he does not go or he will die very quickly. The dead rise. In the prayer they especially drive away the shades, because it is said that sickness from the shades comes from us living. If, for example, I have done something bad to my fellow, and the shades are angry, but if he forgives me, they also forgive. He must express forgiveness openly in words of prayer (*amasyu gamo ga lwiputo*). If he forgives me only in his heart, the shades do not forgive. This prayer that we heard during the day had power both against sorcery and against the shades, they spoke of both. In the evening it was completed.

754 Mwakionde called them all together and said: 'Friends, I am astonished that the illness has come again.' The people: 'Hu; this illness puzzles us very much.'

MWAKIONDE: 'For what reason does this man fall ill in the summer, and that man fall ill in the summer, and the other fall ill?'

SELECT RECORDS

267

MPOMA: 'I am ashamed, and also I am very angry, because people say it is I who am working sorcery against them, although when they were ill I carried them to my house.'¹ 754

Mpoma turned back on the road when they sent medicine for the sick man (i.e. he did not go to the sick man).

A WOMAN: 'Why do they work sorcery against one another when they are both left?'

ANOTHER WOMAN: 'The wives of Mbikule say Mpoma says: "Let me be alone, let me kill all of them and get everything for myself by cunning."'

MWAMBUJULE: 'Since I carried him to my place I said the illness would not be serious. He also sent a message to your place, Mpoma, saying that he was ill, and asking for some milk, but you did not send any.'

MPOMA: 'No one told me.'

THE WOMAN: 'The widows fight with Mpoma. They say: "You have eaten a medicine to work sorcery against your fellows."'

KANYAMALE: 'Also they speak of his wrongdoing, in not approaching the sick man.'

ANOTHER WOMAN: 'Yes, and also you are angry.'

MPOMA: 'See, when they said the present patient was still ill, I prayed, I said aloud: "What am I doing? Get away, what am I doing?" and I sent a medicine and he recovered.'

A WOMAN: 'We consulted an oracle, it said: "It is Mwakyona who is angry," but I said: "What is he angry about?" The oracle said: "He is angry on account of cattle." He says: "Why does he fear me when he has taken cattle?" So we said: "Mwakyona is angry because he has taken cattle."'

THE MBUNGUS (Mwakyona's sisters): 'We like him (the shade), let him come.' 753

WOMAN: 'They are jealous of the sick man [i.e. a third cause suggested. The unreasonable jealousy of his neighbours]. He dies like his father. People say: "He eats meat in our houses, he borrows our cloths," and he dies of their unreasonable jealousy (*akabini*)!'

The women and the men said: 'Thank you, Mwakionde, because you have made us think of these things [he had taken the initiative in prayer]. You make us make friends, and make us love one another, and bless one another.'

Mwakionde spoke, saying: 'There are many, many roads on which people travel and there is one road through which illness enters.' They say that if many people are with a sick man then the illness spreads. 782

They also prayed, confessing their anger in the case of Kanyamale, [783]

¹ 'It is the custom to carry people to the "father", the head of the family, when very sick. This is not supposed to cure them, but it is customary (*lolwiho*). That is where we all are ill, at their father's place.'

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the wife of Mpoma, but about this I do not know much. When they stopped speaking Kanyamale was ill. Then her husband charged her with witchcraft and she said: 'What is the case about? I have been ill since we came from confessing anger.' Then Kanyamale grew sulky and gathered up her mats and went with them to her child's place. Mpoma said: 'I must follow her,' but his fellows soothed him and he turned back. Then he borrowed a spear from his fellows and went to drive off the game which were eating his crops. When he found no animals he went home. On his return, when he was still outside, he heard the wives whispering about some case. He asked them to open the door for him, but they were silent and did not open the door of the hut. Then he pushed it open. When he entered the hut he closed it and he cross-examined the wives, asking what they were talking about. One said: 'I was just asleep.' He said: 'With whom were you speaking? You are hiding a man in this house.' One woman got up immediately and opened the door. Mpoma cross-examined them hotly. He said: 'Why did you open the door if indeed there is no man in the hut?' Mpoma got in a passion and went elsewhere. He returned again and said: 'Marry the child. I will not destroy him,' and he went away alone. [627] He took the case to Mwakisinya, the village headman, and lost it. Then the court said: 'You get the children. Let them come here, though their mother is not here.'

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Later on it was like this: Mwakionde went to attend to the medicines to give to the sick man to drink; they began by putting powdered medicines in a pot, then they put in some water, then they put in three sorts of powdered medicine, one black and two red. Mwakionde, because he was the doctor, began; he put in the water first. Mpoma, the senior, followed him, then all the others. When the water boiled, they stirred up porridge with a spoon, then they gave the sick man some to drink, and the relatives drank. If there were one who was working sorcery against his fellows, he would die when he drank that medicine. But the sick man, before he drank this medicine, drank something else. When the water boiled, they mixed a medicine and scarified themselves all over their bodies.

Konde Children

861 romping glee ; and the musical jingle of the tiny bells that most of them wear on their ankles up till three or so is pleasant to the European, and rings with a thrilling response in the heart of the adoring mother, who sits on the ground watching the gambols of her little one.

843 The unborn child is treated with great care, and surrounded with superstitions. The mother must submit to restrictions in regard to diet, and indications of the sex of the coming child are given by the preferences she shows for permitted foods. She must not eat hot food, for that would burn the child's head ; nor beans, for they might cause the disease called *ilyulu*. An expectant mother who drinks much milk will bear a son ; if she has a great desire for flesh foods, a daughter is known to be coming. A scolding woman need not be surprised if her child is a boy, especially if her husband is the victim of her language. Some women will not eat rice, perhaps because it is a new food, all the possibilities of which have not yet been fully explored.

844 The worst possible place for a woman to have her child born is at her own father's house, unless it is with the consent of her husband ; for every one will assume that the child has an unknown father. If an expectant mother suspects her husband of sorcery she will take care to have her child born at a distance, so that it may not inherit its father's undesirable powers, these being transmissible only at close quarters, and only after birth. With heathen women, the birth, if in the daytime, takes place mostly in the open

Law & Crime

89

its fall ; or if one sends another up a tree to get fruit, 682
or for any other purpose, and the person falls down 672
and is killed, a cow must be paid in compensation ; if
he is only injured, some smaller payment is made.
If I permit a suicide to take place in my house, I must
pay a cow, for I ought to have taken better care of
my house. If a man kills himself with my spear I
come under a similar penalty, and for the same reason.
If a woman suckles another woman's child and it dies,
the law of compensation holds good, and a cow must
be paid. Very many regulations of this kind, which
it would be a weariness to repeat, exist among the
Konde people.

The spear with which a murder has been committed
is cut off short at the haft, and the blade bent over
with a stone, and it is then hung up in the roof of the
house of a relative of the murderer.

Murder is frequently committed by means of 682
poison and by witchcraft ; and in either case it is 754 ●
difficult to trace the criminal. As an instance : a man
is very quarrelsome in his village, an intolerable
nuisance in fact. After a while he goes off to work
somewhere, and now is the opportunity to get rid of
him. In a few months news comes that he has been
killed in a quarrel ; but the quarrel was brought on by
witchcraft. His fellow-villagers went to a sorcerer,
and persuaded him to stir up the quarrelsome one to
some disagreement in his new home, which would be
sure to end in his death. No British magistrate would
consider a charge of murder in such a case, except
against the actual murderers, but the Konde will not

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● 754 be convinced that the real facts are otherwise than as I have stated. The clumsy methods of murder favoured by the cleverest of European criminals take an inferior place before the successful malignity of this kind of thing.

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627 *Witchcraft.*—No crime is regarded with so much abhorrence among Bantu peoples as the crime of witchcraft. It is a crime against the whole community, anti-social, destructive; and the punishment, in many cases, was death. That punishment cannot now be inflicted, but a recent Ordinance against pretended witchcraft has given much satisfaction to the people, even although the punishment is less than they think the crime demands. To them there is no pretence about it; it is a grave reality. If the poison cup proved a person guilty, he was immediately attacked with any weapon that came handy, and as a rule he was dead before he reached the end of the gauntlet; but if, as now and again happened, he got off alive, he lost no time in getting away to another district. In the not so very remote past, the guilty person was burned to death in his own house, and not always did his family escape a like fate. A special punishment was reserved for witchcraft by crocodile. This particular crime consists in bewitching a crocodile to kill an enemy. The criminal, when discovered, was put into the water in a large fish-trap, and left there until a crocodile came and made an end.

684 *Adultery.*—This offence is said to have increased greatly since the coming of the white man, who will not permit the death penalty to be inflicted. But the

Domestic Animals : Agriculture 113

232 neck to tail, saying, "You will now give a cow-calf." What remains of the medicine is put into the stall, and the next calf will be a female. A cow that kills her calf in dropping it is given a medicine which will prevent the recurrence of the fatality. Medicine is also given if the milk is not satisfactory in quantity; and by rubbing in a medicine from tail to neck specialists claim to be able to tell whether a calf in the womb is male or female.

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754 A disease which does not yield to treatment is the work either of the spirits or of a sorcerer. Divination is resorted to, and the particular spirit operating having been discovered, the appropriate offerings are made, and the disease will now yield to treatment. If it is due to witchcraft, the chief is informed, and he publicly announces that if the animal is not well by next day, he will have the poison test applied to discover the culprit. This, however, if done at all to-day, is done in secrecy, for the chief who permits the poison cup to be administered is liable to severe penalties. But so universal is the belief in witchcraft that the suppression of the poison cup is adduced as the cause of a great increase in the number of sorcerers, and consequently of the general insecurity.

696 Cattle are sometimes deliberately poisoned. A man has a case at court, and it goes against him, although he is convinced that he is in the right. He is ordered [278] to pay a cow to his antagonist; which he does, but he first poisons it with a slow-working drug, and the animal will die in a few days. The successful litigant, although he knows perfectly the cause of the death,

114 Domestic Animals : Agriculture

696 rarely appeals, convinced, though without reason, that the magistrate will pooh-pooh his story.

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754 In 1920 a lake-shore chief was fined a large number of cattle ; and the animals, removed to the hills where the veterinary officer lived, did not thrive. The reason is no doubt to be found in the different climate ; but the natives give two quite different ones : many of them were bewitched ; and others were given a slow-working poison by owners who resented the fine. But the fact that many natives willingly bought them when offered for sale seems to indicate not all held the two theories referred to.

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157 When an epidemic carries off large numbers of cattle, the Konde assume a fatalistic attitude. There is nothing to be done : why worry ? In 1894 immense numbers of cattle died of rinderpest. After learning by divination that neither spirits nor sorcerers had anything to do with it, the people put it down to *Mwanjebe*, a troublesome godlet of the neighbouring Kamanga tribe, against whom there was no appeal, and no protection. They assume the same fatalistic attitude to the interference of the white man, and a supreme distrust of all kinds of injections has arisen in their minds, since the widespread injections of 1918, when many of their cattle died. The chiefs are credited with saying on that occasion, " If the white man wishes to inject, let him inject ! Why make him angry ? Let the cattle die rather." If this is true, it is a testimony to the immense personal prestige of the white man, but is hardly flattering to his veterinary skill. A warning was issued that the flesh of cattle

Eating & Drinking 127

daily for supplies, provided it is again quickly covered up with both sand and flowing water. All this must be done at night lest the hiding-place be revealed to others, and the flesh stolen. 251

Bread is made of twice-ground maize with salt added. It is kneaded into loaves of about three inches thick, and placed in layers, interleaved with banana leaf, in a pot with maize in the bottom. This bread is often taken on a journey, and will keep for five or six days. Eggs are "scrambled," with milk and salt, in a broken pot, but this is a European introduction. No young girl will eat hard-boiled eggs; they produce a snake in the abdomen, which, of course, in turn produces barrenness. [177] [842] 252

Very unpleasant to our minds are some of the delicious foods the Konde rejoice in: flying ants eaten alive as they are picked up where they fall from their brief honeymoon in the air; crawling white ants, a horrible mass of moving life; the Kungu fly, found on Lake Nyasa, whence it comes ashore in dense clouds, settles on bush and tree, and is shaken off into small baskets, to be taken home and baked into cakes while it is still fresh. In Bundali it is said that some still eat lion's flesh, and once upon a time the crocodile was eaten at Karonga. Sorcerers are accused of devouring human flesh. A new grave is sprinkled with a powerful medicine which makes the corpse come up without disturbing the soil, and the ghoulish feast is enjoyed without leaving a trace of the deed behind. [754] 266 262

The Supreme Being 181

inspired moments. He is the Maker of sorcerers as well as of common people. "Why do you kill me?" demanded an agonized sorcerer from within the house where they were burning him to death. "Did God not make me as well as you?" "Yes," was the grim reply, "but He also made the grass we burn in November." 776 [754] ●

The Supreme Being reveals Himself "in divers manners." What is specially great of its kind; a great ox, or even a he-goat; a very big tree, or any other specially impressive object, is called *Kyala*, by which is probably meant that God takes up a temporary abode in them. In a great storm God is walking on the lake. A waterfall, when it is unusually noisy, is His voice. In 1921 God called from a waterfall in the Nserya district during the night, and the message, interpreted by the *abakomwa malago* (inspired persons), was that all must die because of the evil that was rampant in the district. The earthquake is His mighty footstep, and the lightning is *Lesa*, God coming down in anger, when all rational people sit silent or speak in whispers, lest "the anger," hearing them, should smite them down. He sometimes comes in the body of a lion or a snake, and in such a form "He walks among men to see their doings."

He is a God of righteousness, though the Konde idea of righteousness does not always coincide with ours. Unrighteousness is an offence against God, even though they do not always know why, and He never comes except when evil is prevalent, and punishment is needed, a point of view from which it is easy to

791 both still living near the lake shore ; but the Germans
787 knew nothing of the prophecy. The effect of it,
however, was that no local carriers could be recruited,
and most of the carriers employed were found among
the Basango to the north. Next, it was asserted that
the Germans would evacuate Neu Langenburg with-
out fighting, which is what actually happened ; and,
finally, about the same time, it was declared that the
"first-comers" would become lords of the country.
These first-comers were Mr. Moir of Glasgow and
his companions, who hunted elephant north of the
Songwe River in the early eighties. Dr. Laws of
Livingstonia visited the north end of the lake much
earlier, but that visit did not make the same impres-
sion as the more prolonged stay of Mr. Moir and his
fellow-hunters.

791 Smallpox is the most dreaded scourge in the
153 district. It is believed to come from the south, pass
● 754 through the land, and finally to disappear among the
Basango to the north, to whom the Konde consigned,
with much gusto, all the evils that they were threat-
ened or afflicted with. Its coming was foretold by
the prophets, who declared that it was an act of God
in punishment of wickedness. But smallpox was
sometimes brought by the sorcerers. These enemies
of society were caught in the act—in dreams—by the
prophets, who also, in dreams, went out to meet and
repel them. If the evil-doers were caught and
beaten, their bodies next day would betray them, for
the dream-fight is a stern reality, and the body bears
the marks of battle. If the prophets succeeded in

The Foretellers 219

driving out all the sorcerers, no one would die of 791
smallpox, but one remaining sorcerer could work 753
unlimited mischief so long as he remained undis- 754
covered.

In a community which practises "subsistence 791
agriculture," it is important to know beforehand 261
when the rains will be late, and it is the duty of the
prophets to let the chief know, and through him the
people, when this will happen. In such a contin-
gency, the chief issues instructions, varying in minute-
ness, regulating the kinds of food which are to be
used, and warning against greed. Punishment used
to follow disregard of the prohibition, but the chiefs,
although they still issue orders as before, do not now
venture to punish offenders, or at any rate they
punish none who would be likely to report them to
the Administration.

Famine, however, was not always the result of 731
drought. It was often, in the past, the result of war.
When a powerful enemy approached, the people left
the villages and took refuge in the bush, sometimes
for long periods, leaving all that they could not carry
to fall into the hands of the invader. The last
occasion on which such a famine was foretold was
when the Angoni passed through the land seeking a
habitation. The people fled before them, and a
famine resulted which is still traditionally remem-
bered. With such a powerful enemy approaching,
the prophets had an easy task in foreseeing famine.

The death of chiefs is also foretold. The prophets 622
see in dreams the house of a chief being built in the 787

CHAPTER XX

The Powers of Evil: I. Witchcraft

BELIEF in witchcraft is not among the things 754 •
that are passing away. So universal is the
belief in its malign powers that anyone,
except a Christian, who dares to express
doubts on the matter, is himself in danger of being
denounced as a practiser of the black art. It fills the
whole outlook of the common people. If one is per-
sistently ill, and medicines do not cure him, he sus-
pects some one of practising against him; if children
die one after the other, both parents cannot escape
suspicion, one or other is guilty; if cattle do not give
a normal quantity of milk, some one has bewitched
them. And there is not a house in all heathen Konde-
land that is not, in one way or another, or in many
ways, protected by charms and medicines against the
power of witchcraft.

Witchcraft in Europe is a power gained by traffic
with the Evil One, and used by the possessor either
for his or her own ends, or hired out for payment.
Now among the Konde an *wadani*, witch or wizard,
is as much the creation of God as other men are.
"God has made men in many images," and upon a
few He has bestowed those mysterious and evil powers

754 in the presence of which common men, if unprotected,
are so helpless.

While common men dread nothing so much as an accusation of witchcraft, there are swaggering fellows, great doctors and others, who boast openly of their powers; and so great is the dread in which they are held, that no one dares to cross them, or to have them brought to trial. All chiefs of any standing are credited with the power of witchcraft, but in their case it is supposed to be a special endowment to enable them to maintain their position against evil-doers.

Witchcraft is hereditary; men and women are born with it; born with two *isota*, serpents, in the stomach, by the power of which they can leave the body, and go about at night, unseen, to work their evil will on man and beast. If a parent is *wadosi*, the children will be also; but if an expectant mother knows that her husband is a wizard, she will take care to have her child born at a distance, so that it cannot inherit its father's undesirable powers. If inherited from the mother, it is of peculiar virulence; but if from the father, the powers sometimes lie quiescent, and do no harm to anyone. If the *post mortem* reveals tokens of witchcraft on the left side, it has come from the mother; if on the right, from the father.

The Konde recognize three degrees of power, or of wickedness, in witchcraft. There are the comparatively harmless persons who drink the milk of cows at night, but do no other harm; their punishment, if discovered, is to herd the cattle the whole of the next

Witchcraft

253

day; next, those who destroy men and cattle, and everything else, by means of their hidden powers; and finally, the creators of lions, leopards, crocodiles, and eagles, who are the worst enemies of society, but who are held in such fear that they are seldom molested. The official dreamers, already frequently referred to, have one *isota*, serpent, in the stomach, but they are not called wizards; they are witch destroyers, or at least discoverers, for they have the power of seeing in dreams what these evil men are doing, and in dreams going out to fight them. And if, in the dream, the dreamer kills the snake with which he fights, the owner will be found dead in the morning.

Perhaps one of the commonest charges of witchcraft is made in connection with the milk supply. As a rule, in December, the chief sends out word that he expects the milk supply to be good for the year; if it turns out to be less than was expected, and if there has been no drought, it is obvious that there has been undue interference, and that on a great scale, with the cattle. The whole of the people of the affected district are summoned to the chief's village, and put to the test; each person bringing all the cattle he possesses. There are two tests: by the ear, and by the stomach, that is to say by poison. The people sit in a great circle, and one after another comes up to the doctor, who bores the ear with a sharp instrument; if the ear is easily bored, the person is innocent: if the skin is tough, and resists, he is guilty, and is ordered to sit on one side, where he is joined by all others who are found out in the same way.

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- 754 But each person who is declared innocent goes at once,
695 without further parley, to take charge of the cattle
which he brought to the meeting. From the guilty
persons everything is taken away : cattle, hoes, cooking
pots, food stocks ; and men are sent at once to burn
down their houses. The live stock is the property of
the chief, and it is mostly killed on the spot, and eaten,
or dried, before the assembly departs ; while the
wretched criminals are sent out into the world, home-
less and in poverty. *They are not always expelled*
from the district, but they usually prefer to go to
another chief.

The poison test has the same results for the guilty ;
but every individual is not necessarily tested. From
each village one man is taken, and he drinks for the
whole of that community. If he vomits, not only he,
but all the village which he represents is innocent.
If he does not, it does not follow that he is himself
the guilty person, but only that the criminal (or
criminals) will be found in his village. They are taken
individually, and the poison administered, the inno-
cent vomiting, and the guilty failing to do so. The
decoction is never strong enough among the Konde to
kill, and therefore other punishments must be found.
Not infrequently a dog or a cock is made to take the
poison, the results being credited or debited to the
person for whom it stands.

The "smelling out" of witches is not generally
practised ; but there is a woman at Tukuyu, a stout
young woman with a hearty laugh, who has the power
of picking out the innocent when a general accusation

Witchcraft

255

of witchcraft is made. The people are assembled by order of the chief, and the woman walks slowly round the circle, gazing into the eyes of each person, and eliminating the innocent one by one, using no other test than the look in the individual's eyes. Those who remain are guilty. 754 ●
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Prosperity in another arouses all the evil passions of witches and wizards. But prosperity in itself was, until lately, evidence that the prosperous person was himself a wizard. There is a woman living not far from me who was accused before the British magistrate of pretending to exercise witchcraft, and to obtain cattle and other goods by threatening violence. She was dismissed on technical grounds, but ordered not to return to her own district. In conversation with her after the trial she told me that it was only the presence of the white man that saved her from being burned alive as a witch; the evidence against her being the rapid increase of her live stock. But the increase, she assured me, was "the gift of God." 754
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Death by burning was the ancient penalty when that was inflicted publicly; but when the witches or wizards themselves undertook to kill a fellow-sorcerer in jealousy, they did it in another way. Leaving their bodies behind them, they go to the house of the victim, enter by the roof, disturbing nothing; and finally enter the stomach of the sleeping person. Thence they wander about to lungs, heart, or liver, and wound him with their "secret spears." Next day the man is ill, and the day following he dies. If the *post mortem* reveals ulcers on heart, lungs, or liver, [683]
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754 it is entirely satisfactory evidence that death was due to witchcraft. The whole population is called up, and the chief directs the application of the poison test, in the manner already described. If the culprits are not discovered, they bring the body of the victim to the surface without disturbing the soil (an art the secret of which is now confined to a very few persons), and indulge in a ghoulish cannibal feast. At Karonga in 1913 a suspicion arose that this had happened, and men who had enjoyed the benefits of many years' training at the Overtoun Institution told me that they did not believe that such things happened now, since Christ had destroyed the powers of evil, but they had no doubt whatever that they happened frequently in the past.

Smallpox is popularly supposed to be due, in many cases, to witchcraft. The witches go to Karonga, or elsewhere, and bring the disease back in a goatskin bag. But not unseen: the ever-watchful dreamers see them, and go out to fight them; but it would seem that there must be occasions when the powers of good are overcome or outwitted by the powers of evil; for smallpox does get in; and the question arises, has it been sent by God, or brought in by wicked persons? The question is soon answered, for plagues brought in by Divine agency never show a long death-roll: God does not do such things. It is the work of the witches, and the test is administered, and the evil-doers punished. It need hardly be added that the poison test is prohibited, and also the ear test, by European government, and that if it is resorted to

Witchcraft

257

at all, it is done in secret. But other methods are in use that are not so easy to detect. A suspected person is mercilessly beaten, and there are many who have, under stress of such thrashings, confessed their guilt, lest the thrashing end in death. In the good old days, before the Europeans began to interfere, guilty persons might be burned to death with all their family. To-day, if the chief is afraid to take more drastic steps, the suspected person is warned to depart. Coming out in the morning he finds at his door a banana stem, with leaves tied to the top; and if he refuses the hint, he may be mobbed the same day. Native law gives him the privilege of challenging the poison test, and the unhappy chief in that case must either agree and risk being denounced to the magistrate, or refuse to apply the test and withdraw the charge. The lot of the chief who has to steer his way between native and British law is not always a happy one. In the case I am supposing, if he agrees to the poison test in the hope of escaping the attentions of the police, he may find himself with two deaths on his hands, for both accuser and accused must take the test, and although the poison is usually administered in a weak decoction, still accidents have been known to happen.

A plague of mice is also brought on by witchcraft. At Karonga, a man called Ndambasya, still living at Mfuru, on the Rukuru River, possesses this gift. His grandfather was put to death for the offence, but Ndambasya pursues his nefarious practices under the aegis of the British Government, which is far too

754 intelligent to believe such nonsense. The method is to take a male and a female mouse, cover them up in a pot with medicines, and when they have bred they are sent out into the gardens, where they multiply exceedingly. The British method of dealing with this plague is to pay so much for every dead mouse brought in; the Konde believe in getting at the sources of things, and as the source in this case is Ndambasya, he, if left to the tender mercies of his fellows, would die. There was a recrudescence of the plague in the year 1924, and I suspect Ndambasya did not feel too comfortable, for the patience of the people has a habit of coming to a sudden end at times.

The methods by which witches and warlocks work their evil will are many. By the power of the evil eye they stop the milk of cattle, bring illness on children, and cause various kinds of misfortunes to come upon their enemies. One may kill a man by making a wax effigy, and letting it slowly melt before the fire. He will die when the whole has been melted. Pneumonia is brought on by making a small circlet of the leaves or roots from which various kinds of medicines are made, and sticking a wooden pin through it. A banana leaf pinned in four places will lead to the death of the victim, and the *post mortem* will reveal four internal wounds. Certain medicines put into a hole in the ground will turn a blood-red colour. Cover the hole carefully from sight, and in due time your man will cease to trouble you. A sure specific for causing the death of an enemy is made from hair clippings, nail parings, the spittle, earth gathered from

Witchcraft

259

the footprints of the victim, and the banana or other leaf on which he sat, mixed with medicines of various kinds. The mixture is not administered to the victim. It is enough that it has been compounded. 754●

One more method of operating will be sufficient, though there are many others. The witch or wizard, stark-naked, goes, at night, after all are in bed, to the house of the person he wishes to injure, and there dances the dance called *kuyinga*, and then goes silently away. In the morning a child becomes sick, and shortly dies. Or, if it is not desired to be so unforgiving, the harvest of the victim will be blighted. The wise householder, however, is not without defence. He secures himself and his family, and his gardens, from this kind of thing by placing medicine in the roof of his house, which roots to the spot the dancing wizard, who is found there in the morning, and dealt with.

There is a very complete system of protection, which has been developed during the ages, guarding the person and the community against all kinds of evil, forming, as one writer has remarked, an insurance against accidents and evil powers. The protection against witchcraft is especially complete. 754
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First, there is the risk of discovery by revelation, as in the dreams already referred to; or by experiment, as when the doctors apply their tests. But although the dreamer sometimes makes his discovery before any evil has been done, he perhaps as frequently fails; and the doctor is never called in until the evil demands drastic treatment.

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789 Therefore it must be anticipated by the use of powerful medicines, which would probably be called charms in Europe; but as the Konde call them medicines, I prefer to use that term. There is communal protection, and individual. For the former certain herbs are taken, burned into an ash, and mixed with oil. The mixture is put into two horns, one of which is placed in the rafters inside the chief's house, and the other under the eaves outside, and behind. No one may approach the chief's house from behind, for the medicines would destroy him. But, wheels within wheels, another drug is known which can destroy the efficacy of the drugs in the horn, and therefore anyone seen approaching the house from behind would be suspected of trying to nullify the measures taken to ensure public safety. To make this nullifying drug, the leaves of *malimbalimba* and *undurusa* are taken, and their extract added to what is in the horn, which thereupon loses its virtue, and the public are exposed to danger.

To protect individual houses, the leaves of certain trees are taken, and laid on the fire, so that the smoke, spreading through the house, may ensure the safety of the inmates. Then the same leaves, pounded and mixed with water, are sprinkled on the floor; and finally the root of another herb is buried under the doorstep, and will effectually prevent the entrance of witch or warlock. When a new house is being built, this same root is placed in various positions in the foundation, and the house is now protected from turret to foundation-stone, and the inmates dwell in

Witchcraft

261

security. As already said, no heathen house is without this protection. Gardens and cattle kraals are protected in similar ways. 789 754 ●

But witchcraft spreads its nets far and wide, and it is not enough to protect the house, for a man may be attacked outside. To meet this menace, other measures must be taken. Each person drinks a decoction, and swallows a tiny white stone, found only in the Malila district. The effect of this is to enable him to see in dreams any dangers which threaten him personally from witchcraft; and to make assurance doubly sure, some persons wear charms on neck or wrist or ankle.

No one knows when danger will come upon him. One who looks you steadily in the face is probably a wizard; why else should he look at you so? One who does not return your salutation, or returns it half-heartedly; one who denies the reality of witchcraft; one who is a notorious invader of the rights of husbands; all such men (or women) are to be avoided, for they are all probably dangerous.

And the reproach of witchcraft follows one after death. If the *post mortem* shows marks on the internal organs, the person has died of witchcraft; but if the bowels are swollen or blackened, either to the right or to the left, the dead man was beyond doubt himself a wizard; the swollen condition indicates clearly the presence of the two serpents which were the source of his secret powers. Any suspicion that was formerly entertained against him is now confirmed, and his heirs may find themselves involved in demands for reparation. 754 763

● 754
789 In 1922 a sorcerer got into the house of the chief Kaloso, near Mwaya. The medicine which is always there brought him to a halt, and when Kaloso rose in the morning, he found him there in the form of an owl! Kaloso is one of the most intelligent chiefs I know; but he sent out word, and his people came in great numbers to see with their own eyes the owl which was a sorcerer caught in the act. The owl was not killed, for who knew what evil might be brought on the district if that were done? I suggested that it was an ordinary owl, which somehow had got into the house the previous evening. But ordinary owls, I was told, do not go into houses, while every one knows that wizards can be changed into owls by the medicine in the chief's house.

754 Sorcerers have naturally means of self-defence not available for common men. One wounded in a fight licks the wound and recovers; or if the wound is inaccessible to his lips, he takes the blood with his hand and swallows it, with the same result. One who has fallen sick of smallpox licks the pustules and recovers.

CHAPTER XXI

The Powers of Evil: II. Destructive Agencies

THE attack upon Society, if one may so describe it, is not confined to the kind of witchcraft dealt with in the preceding chapter. More terrifying perhaps, and certainly more dramatic, is the power which enables certain persons, also called *Abalosi* (witches, wizards), to call up lions, crocodiles, and other agencies of death, and to direct their operations. When a crocodile secures a human victim, it leaves a part for its "father," the witch or wizard. A person killed by a crocodile, but rescued when too late, is not at once buried; the body is watched to see if any token of attack by witchcraft can be detected. 754 ●

More important, however, is the *umperangalamu*, the lion-maker. Let it be again noted that, as in the cases of smallpox, a long death-roll of people killed by a lion is not the act of God; God does not do such things. It is the work of an evil agent, operating for hire, or to serve his own purposes.

Sir Harry Johnston in his "British Central Africa," tells that when an attack was planned by the British forces upon a certain slave-raiding chief, a friend of

264 Destructive Agencies

754 the latter, unable to send help in men, sent his son to raise all the lions and leopards in the country against the invaders. So confident were the people of the power of this man, that they did not even go out to fight until the British force was upon them; and even then they made but a faint resistance, believing that the lions and leopards would ultimately come to their aid.

At least three men who claim, or are believed to possess, this power, are alive to-day in or near the Konde country. At Deep Bay, Kayiparule is popularly supposed to have it, and at Fulirwa, not far off, Nkurunganga; both of whom now disclaim knowledge of the secret, though they boast that their fathers knew it.

Kabeta of Musomba village, in the Isoko district, is perhaps the most famous of these men. In 1920 he was hired by a man called Mwamswero to kill men, women, and children in the Nyondo district in Nyasaland. The chief Nyondo was believed to have killed the brother of Mwamswero, and had paid only three cows instead of five to the family of the murdered man. The injured family, having no remedy against the chief, determined to call in other resources, and hence the employment of Kabeta. In the year indicated, a lion killed several people in seven different villages, all belonging to the chief Nyondo, and Kabeta demanded payment. Mwamswero offered him four cows, but the lion-maker demanded five, otherwise Mwamswero himself would be the next victim. In a public inquiry, Kabeta acknowledged

Destructive Agencies

265

having received the cattle, but admitted that he was ⁷⁵⁴ deceiving the people.

There is a medicine which protects those who have ⁷⁵⁴ it against these lions. Kabeta himself, on the occa- ⁷⁸⁹ sion referred to, gave medicine to the people of Chinunka, and to the son of Nyondo. To Mwakapalira of Chinunka he gave charms to put on his neck, and a rod to carry in his hand, with the assurance that these gave perfect protection to whoever carried them. One Sunday, Mwakapalira sent his two wives to the garden to get *malesi* to make beer; on the way they met some Christians, who told them that it was Sunday, and they should not do such work; but the women replied that God did not stop working on Sunday, and in any case they were adequately protected. One of the women was killed within an hour by a lion, and belief in Kabeta's charms against his own lions fell to zero.

Individual protection, however, is not enough, and when such visitations threaten, the chief usually takes measures for the public safety. The following is the method practised by the chief Mwenemusuku: his doctor takes the heart and claws of a lion, which he boils together with the flesh of the dread flying-serpent *inyifwira*; the chief eats the heart of the lion, and is assured by the doctor that he is now himself a lion. The rest of the medicine is powdered and sent to all the headmen. These send out men to "walk the marches," bearing some of the medicine, and praying as they go:

"Ye spirits, be gracious to us. This evil that is coming upon us, we know not whence it is. If it

266 Destructive Agencies

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789 is the act of God, let it work, His house is great.
But if it is the act of men, let it go where the sin is.
I and mine have done nothing amiss."

As they go, they chew, for their own protection, the leaves of a shrub called *munyekomaso*, putting the chewed leaves into a small sack at the side. The common people are warned to go in certain directions only for wood and water as long as the lion is known to be about. When it approaches a village, the local headman speaks :

"You lion, if you have been sent out by men, follow where your prey leads you ; if you are from God, His house is great, go where you will."

Just how much effect this has on the lion, need not, perhaps, be too closely investigated.

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797 There are numerous stories, which, if they do nothing else, illustrate the naïve faith of native Christians in the protecting care of God. A school inspector, going his rounds in 1920, when Kabeta's lion was about, was offered the use of the protecting drugs, but refused. "God Himself," he said, "is my protector." In 1913 an evangelist was followed for some distance by a lion, and at last turned on the brute :

"You lion," he said, "you have no master. I have a Master, Jesus Christ. I do not fear you. Do not follow me ; get off in another direction " ;

which the lion, after roaring angrily, did ! In the same year a lion was moving about on the lake shore,

Destructive Agencies 267

but the Christians, secure in their faith, refused to be kept from their gardens. No one, so far as I heard, either Christian or heathen, was killed at that time. A Christian man, walking alone through the bush, was chased by an elephant. "And God said, 'Look,' and I looked, and behold a pit; and I went down into it, and the elephant passed me by; and again God said 'Look,' and I looked, and behold in the pit a very evil snake." There the written report ends; but as I had myself seen this man holding "a very evil snake" alive in his hand, I have no reason to doubt that he acted with promptitude in the pit. 781
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The *inguluka* is a whitish snake, about four feet long, with a deadly bite. That it should exist at all is bad enough; but there are sorcerers who create it for their own purposes. Mwankosore, who lives about two miles from me, is believed to possess this power. He takes the roots of the *pasi* tree, which he puts into a pot along with a powerful medicine, and in a little time a snake emerges. The secret of this medicine is known to a very few, and is guarded by word and by spell. The intending purchaser must face a guard of other snakes sent out to kill him by the makers of the drug; should he, however, kill the snakes, he is acknowledged to be a great doctor, and a supply of the medicine is given to him, for which he pays a cow. 754 •
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When a sorcerer wishes to kill an enemy, he takes in his hand the snake he has created, and drops it at the house of his intended victim. It immediately makes for the doomed man, strikes, and returns with 754

268 Destructive Agencies

●754 all speed to its "father." Should the victim have the good fortune to kill it, it will return to its original elements, and appear before him as a mere root of a tree.

The next class of people who possess destructive powers are the poisoners. Direct evidence is naturally hard to get, for the poisoner must act in secret. The poison need not be administered directly, though that is often done; if placed where the victim will touch it, it is enough; over the door, where it will drip on his head, or on the threshold, where he will touch it with his foot. Death will follow. In 1905 a man called Ulukamba had a quarrel with a neighbour, and sent his son to place medicine in the doorway of his enemy. Two days later a son of the latter died suddenly. The boy who placed the medicine gave away the secret, by telling some one, and Ulukamba was put to the poison test, which condemned him, and he was ordered to pay over two cows. He refused, threatened to inform the magistrate that the chief had consented to the poison ordeal, and the case had to be dropped. But the belief that he killed the boy is still firmly held by all the people of his village. There was no case against the boy who placed the medicine, as he was obeying orders issued by his father.

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593 The destructive power of anger is firmly believed in by the Konde. To speak the name of a brother in anger, is strictly forbidden, for it may lead to his death. The process is rationalized thus: the spirits hear the words of anger, and, assuming that there is

PEOPLES OF THE LAKE NYASA REGION
MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

RELIGION

769 The ancestor cult was the main feature of Ngonde religion. As long as a man had alive a father, father's full brother, or a senior brother, this senior kinsman dealt with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal was made to the spirits. If the diviner diagnosed anger of the ancestors as cause, the senior kinsman had to pray for the sick one. If the half-brothers lived at a distance from each other after the death of their father and uncles, each might pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness, but if it persisted a message had to be sent to the senior kinsman. Wrongs which aroused the anger of the spirits were usually breaches of family morality, insult to a father, neglect of responsibilities by an heir. Offerings consisted of a bull, hen, or beer in the case of commoners; a cow in the case of a chief. The worship of dead chiefs as such was not connected with everyday morality. On the offering of cows by chiefs to their immediate ancestors depended the food and health of the chiefdom and the fertility of women and cows.¹

769 Each Kyungu was buried in the valley around Mbanda, and the grave was planted with trees, making a sacred grove. In times of drought and widespread sickness, sacrifices were made at the groves under the guidance of a diviner.² An insult to the living Kyungu was believed to cause a drought. Each chief or noble was believed to be able to avert local misfortunes for his own people, and the head of every family participated in the divinity of his own ancestors. The great commoners of each chief were believed to have independent access to his ancestral spirits, and so to have a hold upon him. The nobles of Ngonde had a similar power over the Kyungu.

643 As the Kyungu's health was bound up with the welfare of the community, elaborate precautions to maintain his health and to protect him from the danger of sexual impurity were taken, and when he ailed he was killed by suffocation.³

778 Sacred lagoons by the lake were associated not with the ancestors, but with a vague supreme deity, Mbanda.⁴

796 There were two important annual rituals for the whole tribe in addition to the special sacrifices to avert misfortune. One was the clearing out of the ashes each year after the break of the rains, which was performed on the order of the Kyungu, given through the nobles of Ngonde. The second was the elaborate first-fruits ceremony: fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde, in the grove of the last dead Kyungu, and then by the great chiefs, each in the grove of his own predecessor. The nobles and the chiefs of the hills had similar rituals, but they were not synchronised with those of the plain.⁵

WITCHCRAFT

• 754 The Ngonde believe that certain men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action. The witchcraft is hereditary, and of particular virulence if inherited through the mother.⁶ Witches exert their influence at night in dreams. There are two kinds of witches, *amwanga*, defender

¹ Wilson, 2, 1926, pp. 276-7; 1, 1926, p. 81; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 191 and 196, also Ch. VII.

² Wilson, 3, 1926, pp. 20-21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 178-87.

⁴ Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 230-62.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-4.

⁶ Wilson, 3, 1926, pp. 20-21.

NORTH NYASA REGION

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witches, who use their power beneficently and spend their dreams in efforts to counter-act the aggressor witches, *avai*, who use their power maliciously. The great commoner is the strongest of the former type, and the 'defender of the village'. A man who earns universal unpopularity is subject to a spiritual attack from the 'defenders', and is liable to fall sick from the blast of unpopularity. Belief in this efficacy of the 'breath of men' is one of the sanctions of the accepted social order.¹

Only magic is believed to have power to punish wrongdoers who are neither kinsmen nor members of the same chiefdom. Magic exerts an influence on the behaviour of kinsmen and affines. The witchcraft of a neglected wife may cause a man to fall sick, or that of his father-in-law may harm his children.² The power of witchcraft never acts between relatives, though it might between husband and wife.³

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An aggressor witch was reported in the old days by the great commoner to the chief, who ordered the poison ordeal. If the accused failed to vomit (the dose was seldom fatal), he was proved guilty and killed or exiled, all his cows and property being taken by the chief and the victims of his aggressive witchcraft. If a private individual accused another, both were put to the ordeal; if both vomited, the accuser had to pay two cows to the other for slander; if either failed to vomit he was punished as guilty. The ordeal is now illegal, but men accused of aggressive witchcraft still find it best to fly the chiefdom. Great commoners normally used their witchcraft powers to protect their chief from attack, but if he erred they would join in the attack on him; the nobles of Ngonda had power to exert a similar constitutional check on the Kyungu.⁴

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If death by aggressive witchcraft was suspected, it was proved or disproved by a routine post-mortem examination and by subsequent consultation with the diviner.⁵

BIRTH

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A child should be born in its own father's house. A difficult birth is a sign of the guilt of adultery, and is eased by confession.⁶ A few days after the birth the mother is anointed, shaved, and resumes her household duties. She later goes on a visit of some weeks to show the child to her own parents, returning to her husband after celebration by both sets of grandparents, and exchanges of food and beer. The birth of twins was a great misfortune, requiring the segregation and ritual purification of both parents.⁷

INITIATION

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There was no puberty or initiation rite for boys. The initiation of a girl was really a pre-marriage rite. She went through a complicated rite to ensure fertility, in which the husband took part. The initiation lasts some months, and includes several exchanges of food between the families of the girl and her betrothed husband, and ceremonies in which her girl friends of the same village and his friends of his village take part. The girl is tested for virginity during the ceremonies. If she is not betrothed before puberty the initiation is carried out in a modified form, but the full significance is lost.⁸

¹ Wilson, *z.* 1938, p. 277.² *Ibid.*, p. 278.³ *Ibid.*, *z.* 1938, p. 22.⁴ *Ibid.*, *z.* 1939, p. 28.⁵ Johannes, 1891, p. 442.⁶ Wilson and Hamner, 1939, p. 10; Mackenzie, 1893, pp. 42-3.⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3. According to H. H. Johannes, if the children died in succession the father was expected to kill himself, but it is possible that he is assuming a custom of the Southern Tumbuka (1891, p. 477).⁸ *Ibid.*, 1939, p. 31; Wilson and Hamner, 1939, p. 11; Wilson, *z.* 1938, p. 278.

incorporating the previous inhabitants. Now saturation point has been reached; their chiefdoms cover nearly all the available land and include in their membership all the indigenous people; and the custom of dividing chiefdoms into two is doomed. At the moment, however, it is still a vital part of their constitutional law. The division of a chiefdom is apparent from the moment that a ruling chief marries his two great wives, for he builds their houses separately, one in each "side" (*alubafa*) of his chiefdom. The son of each great wife inherits that side of the chiefdom in which his mother's house is built.

When the ruling chief begins to get old the two heirs are ceremonially "brought out" and recognized as chiefs, though they do not assume full powers until their father's death. And their "coming out" is also the "coming out" of all the young men, of all the boys' villages which have been built by the sons of the old chief's men. At the "coming out" each such village is formally given land by the old chief and his great-commoners, often in a new place.

In every village there is a headman whose title, *alifumu*, is simply a specialized use of the general term for a member of an old family who is not a chief. Every commoner is called an *alifumu* in his home chiefdom.¹ These two uses of the term I distinguish by calling the village headman a "great-commoner." Great-commoners, then, are selected for their wealth and ability by the older great-commoners of the chiefdom and hold office for life. In the boys' villages before the "coming out" they are chosen by the older great-commoners—those in charge of their fathers' villages—on that side of the chiefdom. If they prove satisfactory their appointments are confirmed by all the great-commoners of the old chiefdom at the "coming out," if not new ones are then selected.

At the "coming out" the young great-commoners are ritually treated with medicines to give them the power of witchcraft which they are expected to use in the interests of morality, while the young chiefs are treated with medicines to make them fierce and impressive themselves and to ensure the fertility of their land and the prosperity of the people under them.

Traditionally the young chiefs assumed authority, each in the young men's villages which composed his own new chiefdom, immediately after the "coming out" and in the old villages in one side of his father's chiefdom when his father died. To-day the position differs for the Administration does not recognize the young chiefs at all until their father is dead.

The separation of chiefdoms established at the "coming out" is often modified subsequently. In the old days brother chiefs frequently

¹ *Ibid* *ibid* p. 33.

vary in different circumstances. Millet and rice, the two most valuable crops, belong to the man and are stored by him ; so that the division of a millet or rice garden into plots and their assignment to different wives is rather a division of labour than of property. But of all other crops the woman on whose plots they have grown is an effective owner. She stores them herself in her own house and no other wife of her husband can touch them ; it is only with him that her rights are in any way shared. 241
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The main use of the crops, which the Nyakyusa grow is to provide food for each separate household group. Next in importance is the provision of food and beer for hospitality, and for the making of gifts—both in everyday life and on special ceremonial occasions. And, finally, there is the barter or sale of surplus crops to obtain salt, pots, clothes, cattle and to pay tax. Each married woman, therefore, first uses her own crops to feed her husband, her own children and herself. If she is the only wife then she cooks for her husband every day, but, even if she is one of many, she is yet careful to cook for him frequently, in order to keep his affection and the various advantages which go with it. 592
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When cooking for her husband she must, when necessary, prepare sufficient for guests, for a man very often has friends and neighbours eating with him ; and if he wishes to make a gift of cooked food, she cooks it for him from her own store. To provide meals for him and his guests and cooked food for gifts is an obligation which she normally fulfils quite willingly, as we have hinted above ; she may be fond of him ; it is in any case to her interest to play her part in the co-operative relationship which binds them together and from which both alike benefit. He looms for her and builds her house, he gives her a share of the household milk, which he himself controls, he sleeps with and is gentle to her ; he has, without the aid of any legal, moral or conventional sanctions, a great hold over her, as she, on her side, has over him. But, if either fails to play their part in willing co-operation, then there are, for both alike, these other sanctions to fall back upon. A quarrel develops between them and leads to violence, perhaps he strikes her, perhaps she viciously repels him, one night, from her bed ; and then the immediately injured party appeals to the neighbours for support. They discuss the matter, censure one or the other, and try to make it up between them ; if they fail to do so the case may go to Court and one will then have to pay compensation to the other. Or it may happen, without any violent quarrel, without any formal appeal to the neighbours, that one of them becomes aware that his conduct is provoking their mockery and criticism ; and then in shame he mends his ways. Or, finally, one of them may fall sick and suspect that wrong-doing on his part has been followed by spiritual retribution in the form of witchcraft. 543
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A woman, then, uses her stores of food to cook not only for herself

favourite. What they said about her being, perhaps, his favourite was just their way of putting it."

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Before passing to the discussion of the disposal of surplus crops we must dwell a little on the importance of a fair division of land between the several wives of a polygynist. Not only garden plots but also the bananas growing on the homestead are divided between them. Each wife is allotted a number of banana stems and is responsible for keeping *in order* *their* *plots* *clear* *of* *weeds* and she is also expected to weed and sweep the adjacent portion of the open space (*shabingilo*). In the sweeping her husband will often assist her, her fellow wife will not. The bunches which grow on her own banana stems are her property and not even her husband will cut them without consulting her, save in exceptional circumstances. In every polygynous household, then, a division of garden plots and bananas is made between the wives, and, as it is made by the husband, it is a most important element of their relationships with one another.

For every man with more than one wife has a favourite, and, if he allows his affection for her to express itself in an inequitable division of land, then there is trouble in store: "Each wife is the owner of a plot (*shapaka*) and each harvests and weeds it and keeps the food separately. The wives help each other if friendly but each wife must have her own plot—a maize plot, a bean plot, a cassava plot, a plot of sweet-potatoes, and so on. The bananas also are divided between the wives.

"A polygynist when he hoes his gardens is always afraid to give to any one wife a bigger plot than to another. For it is thought that the wife who gets the smaller plot will whisper complaints of her husband among the people; and whispering complaints of a man brings witches to kill him. It is feared that in such a case, either the husband or else the favoured wife will be killed (by witchcraft). In consequence a man is always exceedingly careful, in dividing his garden into plots, to treat his wives fairly. But even so he will perhaps give to the wife whom he loves the plot with the best soil! And it happens sometimes that a polygynist's wife, when given a smaller plot than her co-wives, will sulk and refuse to plant: "Why," she asks, "do you give me such a small garden plot? Did I not cook for you while you were hoeing?" And, if her husband then loses his temper and strikes her, she will make a case before the neighbours. And they will say to him: "Friend, you should make a just division, you will only set your wives against one another by not doing so and make them kill one another." By this they mean that if one wife is angered she will bring the witches to kill her fellow wives!

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"And if a woman is restless with her husband and is herself considering leaving him then she will be forever going and complaining to her

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586 mothers¹ in secret that she is in trouble and that her husband has no regard for her, that he grudges her garden plots and gives her only small ones. Then maybe her mothers will take the initiative in suggesting that she should leave this man who is no husband and who loves her not. And they will tell their husband, her father, that his child is in trouble and—only think of it!—has scarcely a ridge² to call her own. So that if the girl does then find life with her husband intolerable and leaves him, her father will not be too hard on his daughter, he will not compel her to go back to him; for he knows that she was in trouble."

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754] This statement, written by an educated Nyakyusa, brings out very clearly both the fact that men do at times divide their land unfairly and the nature of some of the sanctions which operate against such injustice. The faith in witchcraft provides a moral sanction of which, if the man is fool enough to disregard it, he is very likely explicitly reminded in the course of the subsequent legal proceedings; the injured wife has an immediate hold over him in virtue of the relationship of practical co-operation and emotional intimacy in which they stand to each other, a hold which, if he attempts to break it by recourse to violence, is strengthened and given a legal form by the support of their neighbours. The support of her kin is an alternative legal force³ which an injured wife

[24] ¹ i.e. her father's wives.

² For many crops the ground is hoed into ridges.

³ Some readers may be puzzled by and somewhat critical of the meaning with which the concept of law is employed in this paper. This is not the place to meet their criticisms, but, in order to avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to define that meaning precisely. Law, then, is here distinguished alike from morality with its religious sanctions, from convention with its constraining sense of shame and from the reciprocity dictated by self-interest—with all of which it is in fact inextricably interwoven. Law is here taken to be that normal or customary form of action in society which is kept in being by the inherent necessities of systematic co-operation among its members. The particular form of law varies in different areas of society in accordance with the particular conditions of each area; but some normal form of action there must be everywhere if social life is to continue; anarchy is, in the strictest sense of the word, impracticable. A breach of law is a course of action, on the part of some individual or minority group, which is inconsistent with the normal and accepted form of cooperative action, and which would therefore, if unchecked, make continued relationship between the lawbreakers and the other members of their society wholly impossible; it threatens to dissolve society into anarchy. But breaches of law are always in fact checked, as they must be, by the actions of those with whom the lawbreakers are in practice related; and it is these actions which are the sanctions of law.

If law is to be preserved it is necessary that the actions which sanction it should have an irresistible force, the lawbreaker must normally be helpless before them; and they are only thus irresistible if the great majority of those people with whom the lawbreaker is effectively related do in fact either participate in or at least approve of them. Now in civilized areas of society, in which vast numbers of people are related, legal sanctions must be applied by a central authority if they are to be effective, for only such a central

THE LAND RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AMONG THE NYAKYUSA 31

far as men compete for land that rules of tenure are developed among them. And where competition is weakest there the rules are least strict.

In Nyakyusa society every married man holds land of his own for building and agriculture, for there is still enough for all, and pastures his cattle on the grasslands of some village group. His land rights, in which, as we have seen, his wives and children participate, are conditioned at every point by his membership of a particular village, his allegiance to a particular chief and by the particular cultural idiom of his tribal group.

Before the "coming out" a boy's village, as we have seen, is built on land assigned for the purpose by the parent village. A block of land for building is set aside by the great-commoner in consultation with the other men as their sons begin to reach the age of leaving home, and there the boys are often joined later by contemporaries, sons of other villages of men. At first building sites alone are needed, but later, as the boys grow up and get married, they need gardens too and bring the adjacent ground under cultivation. In doing so they are careful not to infringe upon their fathers' land rights, they either hoe land which was previously uncultivated or else that which has been specifically granted to them by the parent village. Into the nature of such grants of garden land before the "coming out"—whether they are block grants by the parent village as a whole to the boys' village as a whole, or separate grants by individuals to individuals—I omitted to enquire.

At the "coming out" a whole tract of land is formally allotted to each village of young men by the old chief and his great-commoners and within this tract individuals take up garden land by hoeing it. At the "coming out" it is said that "everything is made new," boundaries are redrawn and the new chiefdoms and villages of the young men are ceremonially incorporated.

The situation in which individual land rights in relation to the village group and the chief are clearest to an observer is that of the taking up of land after a move, for it is in this situation that disputes are most frequent.

Mainly owing to their religious beliefs movement from one place to another is constant among the pagan Nyakyusa. If a man or his wife or child falls sick and does not respond quickly to medical treatment the witchcraft of neighbours is at once suspected as a possible cause; there are always other possible causes too so diviners are consulted in order to decide between them; but if the suspicion of neighbourly witchcraft is confirmed then the cure for the sickness is held to lie in moving. In every village "some people" are vaguely believed to have the power of

¹ Vide infra, pp. 61-2.

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[68] witchcraft, which consists in the ability to translate evil impulses into effective though immaterial actions and thus to cause sickness and death; but it is never clearly known who all these people are. And so the coincidence of an obstinate illness with any quarrel or social tension of any kind between neighbours gives rise to a suspicion that witchcraft is at work. If the diviners support this theory then almost the only thing to be done nowadays is to move and get out of range; for witchcraft cannot act at a distance. In the old days an alternative course of action was open to the sick man, he might identify the witch with the aid of the *mungu* ordeal and get him expelled from the chiefdom. Expulsions for witchcraft still occur to-day, but only rarely, for the *mungu* ordeal, the most certain detector of witches, is no longer legal. There is, however, nothing to prevent a man who thinks himself bewitched from moving. Now this fact of constant movement is of the utmost importance in determining the Nyakyusa system of land tenure since it tends to prevent the development of any exclusive attachment to particular pieces of ground. And the cause of this constant movement is mainly, though not entirely, the fear of witchcraft.

For ordinary commoners only their immediate neighbours are believed to be dangerous and sick men therefore sometimes move only from one village to another of the same chiefdom; but very many move right outside to another chiefdom altogether, preferring to make assurance doubly sure and to put a long distance between themselves and their spiritual persecutors. And in the case of certain men of a high social status, for whom a wider circle is dangerous, it is held to be quite essential to leave the chiefdom.

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I have no detailed statistics on moving but I estimate that, among the pagan Nyakyusa, at least 80% of the married men have, at some time or other, moved from the chiefdoms in which they first cultivated gardens of their own. They may stay away for a few weeks only, they may stay away for thirty years or they may never return at all. If, however, the chiefdom from which they first moved is the one which they regard as home then they usually do return to it in the end. A man's home chiefdom is pre-eminently the one in which his father lives, or, if dead, spent most of his life and is now buried. And this is normally the one in which he himself also was born and brought up and in which he first took up land.

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When a man moves from his home chiefdom, his village neighbours there, in the majority of cases, follow him within two months and ceremonially invite him back with a show of force by seizing his belongings and carrying them off home to his old village. They may really like and respect him and if, as is usually the case, he has moved because of sick-

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624 out boundaries, drawing lines on the ground; he divided the land into three portions, one for each. The others were strangers to the chiefdom but had taken a fancy to that piece of land."

The sentence in this story "The chief gave the garden land of Mwakajike to other people" deserves remark for it in no way implies any other custom than the one we have previously described. And it illustrates the dangers of relying too much on verbal statements of custom. When a stranger is given land by a great-commoner after reference to the chief he is commonly said to have been given it by the chief. The chief, from one point of view, is the overlord and the great-commoner acts for him. But, and this is an essential qualification, the great-commoner nearly always so acts for the chief and, save exceptionally, it is wholly incorrect for the chief to grant land directly. The great-commoner acts not only for the chief but also as the representative and leader of the villagers; and in relation to them the chief cannot exercise his rights of overlordship save occasionally and in particular circumstances.

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622 The old Kukwe great-commoner whom we have already quoted explained this to me very clearly: "Occasionally one of his own men will ask a chief to give him ground to hoe in another village, 'If indeed you say that the land is yours!' (challenging the chief to assert his right of overlordship). Then the chief agrees that all the land is most certainly his; but still, if it is possible, he tells the man to go to the commoners of that village and ask them for land. If the chief does not do this (but makes a direct grant of land) we blame him for not being a true chief: 'Who is it,' we ask him, 'that has built up this country? Did you do it all by yourself? It is we the commoners who have built it up! And how is it, then, that you give this man land without consulting us?' " Nor is the censure of his people mere idle talk for a Nyakyusa chief, he fears that they may bewitch him, that the witches among them, led by the great-commoners of the several villages, may come in dreams at night and cause him to sicken or to die.

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423 So much for the initial grants of land to newcomers and the rights of men returning to their home chiefdoms. If a man goes back, after moving, to a chiefdom which is in no sense his home, where, that is to say, he is not a member of an old family but in which he has himself spent some years, he is treated as a newcomer. He is welcomed but he has no rights to the ground, whether building-site or gardens, which he previously occupied.

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425 Once established in a village, however, any man can hoe any uncrowded ground within its borders and thereby make it his own. A newcomer for

789 status it rightly belonged, he would at once fall down dead. And many
554 stories are still told of such happenings in the past.

643 And besides this there was the fact that the Kyungu, being the
richest man in Ngonde and in the most intimate contact with the ivory
traders, could secure medicines from a distance, which had a greater
reputation than local ones.

781 But, as in the theistic aspect of the religion of Ngonde there was
771 considerable local and family autonomy, so also was there in the magical
554 aspect; and here there was individual autonomy also. Lesser rulers had
lesser magic than Mbande, but still it was magic. Ordinary chiefs, for
instance, had magically filled *seba* tails which gave their people military
success. And every individual could go to a doctor and exchange a little
of his surplus food for magic. Success in love and hunting, in warfare
and legal disputes, good crops and good health—all alike, it was believed,
magic could give.

(c). THE ELEMENT OF WITCHCRAFT.

● 754 Both in Ngonde and among the Nyakyusa it was believed that cer-
622 tain commoners had snakes in their stomachs which gave them the power
624 of witchcraft (*uwadui* or *uwanga*?) and among those who had this power
were the great-commoners of every chiefdom. Normally a ruling chief
was spiritually protected by his great-commoners from the malicious
attacks of other witches, but, if he did wrong, then the great-commoners,
so it was held, would cease to protect him and join in the attack.

Now in many circumstances the great-commoners' power of witch-
craft and the power of the chief's dead predecessors were believed to act
together. The anger of witches and that of the ancestors were sharply
distinguished in theory, but in practice they often coincided. The
great-commoners, for example, not only had the power of bewitching
their chief but also of appealing to his predecessors to punish
him for wrong-doing; and on particular occasions they were often
believed to do both at once.¹ And the nobles of Ngonde had similar
powers in relation to the Kyungu.²

¹ *Uwadui* is normally used when the act of witchcraft is disapproved of and *uwanga* when it is approved of by the speaker.

² A point of considerable theoretical interest is raised by the reported statements of our best informant on these matters that it was because they were witches that the great-commoners had this power of influencing the chief's ancestors, that they went to the chief's ancestors in their capacity of witches and in the exercise of witchcraft (i.e. by means of the snakes in their stomachs). But our evidence on this point is not yet conclusive.

³ So we were told when we put the question; but it was never substantiated. It was the held which the nobles of Ngonde had over the Kyungu in consequence of his magical rank which was the more emphasized.

These twin religious powers of the great-commoners in relation to their chief (or of the nobles of Ngonde in relation to the Kyungu) were important for the balance of the constitution, for they provided a most effective check upon the actions of the chiefs. If a chief kept within the bounds of constitutional usage then any illness that he had would be attributed by the diviners to some such cause, as the infidelity of his wives or the breach of a taboo; but if he broke some constitutional usage then that would be taken to be the cause of his next illness; the great-commoners, it would be held, were angry and so had made him ill.

It is hardly necessary to stress the local and individual autonomy implicit in the faith in witchcraft. Not only were the great-commoners as a group believed to have an irresistible power through their witchcraft over their chief, but so were the great-commoner and the leading witches of every village believed to have an irresistible power over other individuals within that village. And in both cases their powers were strictly limited, save exceptionally, by the bounds of chiefdom or village. Moreover witches did not always act as a group, an individual witch might maliciously cause another individual to fall ill. In all this the political hierarchy was irrelevant. But it was not irrelevant in dealing with accusations of malicious witchcraft; there proof rested with the poison ordeal and a journey had to be made to a great chief or a leading noble.

4. ECONOMIC ELEMENTS (MIDDLE PERIOD).

We have suggested in the previous section that the traditional religious paramountcy of the Kyungu and his nobles of Ngonde was an important factor of their secular power. But comparison with the Nyakyusa shows us that their control of wealth was equally important. The religious paramountcy furnished a mould into which the stiffening stream of wealth could run and there be minted into the form of sovereignty. Much of the wealth which reached Mbande did not stay there; it was passed back piecemeal to the local rulers of Ngonde, stamped with the divine impress of the Kyungu.

(a) THE INCOME OF MBANDE AND OTHER AUTHORITIES.

Now the traditional income of Mbande consisted of ivory, food, labour, slaves and cattle. Of ivory the Kyungu had a semi-monopoly in the plain and received tribute from the territorial nobles in the hills. Food was brought to him by the chiefs and territorial nobles of the plain, who also, with their men, hoed his public gardens (*imilasa*). Slaves and cattle accrued to him from tribal wars and from his offending

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8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

AN INTRODUCTION TO NYAKYUSA SOCIETY

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ever made to the spirits, but when some member of a family or his wife or child falls sick the anger of the spirits is often suspected as a possible cause. There are usually other reasons suspected as well, and so the sickness is taken to a diviner for diagnosis. Various causes are suggested to the diviner and he selects one among them. If the anger of the spirits is selected then this senior kinsman must pray for the one who is sick, if he is to recover. When half-brothers live at a distance from one another, after their father and his brothers have died, then each may pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness in his own family but if the sickness persists then a message must be sent to the senior kinsman. And, as the anger of the spirits is due to wrong doing, the sinner must reform his ways as well. 769 753 [787]

The wrongs which rouse the spirits to anger are usually breaches of family morality. If a son does not respect his father or insults him, if an heir neglects to feed and provide for the dead man's children, then when sickness falls on him or his own children it will probably be traced to the anger of the spirits at his behaviour. 673

Space does not allow any full analysis of religion in family life and in the relationships of kinamen and affines. Not only the ancestor cult but witchcraft and magic are factors in them. A man's neglect of a wife or his cruelty to her may, it is believed, lead to his falling sick through her witchcraft and that of sympathetic neighbours; his relations with his father-in-law are affected by the fear that if he offends him, his father-in-law may, by magical means, kill his children, and so on. 754 771

Wider kinship groupings than the family gather at ceremonies and are recognized in the rules against incest. But there are no clans; there is no descent group continuous down the generations with a common name and definite membership. Each individual family has its own penumbra of kinsfolk, the effective kindred of a man and his son, or of two half-brothers are not all the same, while each single person is especially related by respect, affection and mutual obligations to particular kinamen beyond his own family. Descent, as we have seen, is patrilineal except in the case of illegitimate children. A man asked for his *ekoko* always recites first the names of his paternal forbears as far as he can remember. But if he is related through mother or grandmother to a chief he usually volunteers this fact as part of his *ekoko*; and questions always elicit some knowledge of his mother's paternal kinsfolk and a statement that "they are my *ekoko* too." Descendants of a common grandfather (either paternal or maternal) are to-day forbidden to marry, and no case of infringement has come to my notice; descendants of a common great-grandfather are supposed not to marry but, I am told, 614 611 614 [787] 582

he settles many legal disputes between his neighbours. The village is, ⁶²¹ both for men and women, the chief field of friendship, conversation and mutual hospitality; and its members recognize greater obligations towards one another than they do towards those outside. Before the coming of the Europeans the age-village was also a military unit, led by its own great commoner, in the constant fights between chiefdoms.

In most villages there are several herds of cattle which feed separately. ²³¹ The herd boys, as we have seen, thus form separate groups within the ⁶²¹ village, so also do their fathers; the boys are related in the common activity of herding, the men, owners of the herd, by their joint interest in it and their common fear of witchcraft.

In the relationships of villagers the belief in witchcraft is a constantly ⁷⁵⁴ recurring factor. It is believed that certain people, both men and women ⁷⁹¹ have the power of harming their neighbours and their neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action whatever, without reciting any spells or performing any magical ritual at all.

Their influence, which is exercised at night in dreams, is only fully visible to those who are themselves endowed with this power; and to it is constantly attributed both sickness in men and the failure of cows to give milk. In this belief the elements of actual ill will and quarreling, of actual sickness and the failure of cows to give milk and of actual dream experiences are combined in a significant whole. Witches are of two kinds, they say, those who use their power rightly (*awa mawga*) and those who use it wrongly (*awalaw*). The first kind are said generally to spend their dreams in trying to prevent the others from harming those whom they hate. The good witches are the "defenders of the village," and in each village the great commoner is believed to be the first among them. In each group of men whose cows are herded together there is, again, commonly one man who has the reputation of defender of the herd, who is believed to protect the cows from the witchcraft of disgruntled individuals whether members of that small group or not. But if, at any time, a single person earns a general unpopularity in the village, whether by his pride, his meanness or by wrongdoing, then it is believed that the defenders themselves lead the spiritual attack against him, and he falls sick. Such a blast of unpopularity acting through the power of witchcraft is called the "breath of men" (*embapo rya vanda*); and the belief in ⁶⁸¹ its efficacy is one of the chief sanctions of the accepted social order of Nyakyusa life.¹⁰

¹⁰ c.f. Godfrey Wilson "An African Mystery" *Africa* Jan. 1935.

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476 all, hunting is organized like warfare and fishing is a joint endeavour, both ordered by the chief.

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Every chief has a title of ownership (*obwene nakyo*) to the land of his chiefdom and can evict any man he pleases, (giving him another plot), if he wishes to build there himself; but his people also have titles of ownership to it, both collectively, under the leadership of the great commoners, and individually, each man to his own ground. It is the great commoners who, in consultation with their neighbours, give to the sons of each village land on which to build; it is they who, together, finally fix the boundaries of the young men's villages at their "Coming Out;" it is they who, again in consultation with their neighbours, grant land to strangers who ask for it, though they must notify the chief and get his approval before doing so.

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As the single great commoners settle disputes within their own villages so the chief and great commoners together hear and decide cases within the chiefdom. Many of these legal actions are now settled in the Courts, but not all of them; and, even when cases are going to Court, preliminary hearings commonly take place before the chief, first. Cases are conducted and witnesses interrogated by chief and great commoners together, and the decision which the chief pronounces is an expression of their general opinion.

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Among the great commoners there is an order of seniority. The leaders of the two senior age-villages of the chief's own men play a prominent part at his "Coming Out," they each have a pre-eminent authority in one side of his chiefdom, and the other great commoners rank as their juniors, some on one side, some on the other. In the old days the two senior great commoners each led a whole side of the chiefdom in war.

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The two most effective checks on the power of a chief are migration and witchcraft. Military strength used to depend upon the number of a chief's adherents, to-day the scale of his salary is similarly dependent; men are quite free to move, and there is a constant flow of adherents from unpopular to popular chiefs. But unpopularity is most feared in its spiritual form of witchcraft. We have seen already that an adverse current of opinion is believed to act invisibly, as the "breath of men," against an unpopular member of a village and to make him sick. So also the adverse opinion of a single village or of a whole chiefdom is believed to have power against a chief, to bring sickness or even death upon him. As in the single village, so in the whole chiefdom the great commoners are the prime sources of this spiritual power; they are believed severally to protect the members of their own villages and jointly to protect their

chief from the wanton attacks of witches; but if ever there is a just ⁶²²
ground of offence they are believed to join their own power of witchcraft ⁷⁵⁴
in the general attack. I know one chief who dare not give a judgement
in a dispute between two of his villages for fear of the indignant witch-
craft of the losing side. And a general unpopularity is believed always to
lead, sooner or later to a chief's death.

Chiefs also, like other men, fear the use of sorcery (i.e. destructive
magic) against them, and use a number of protective "medicines" (i.e.
materials of magic) to protect themselves from it. They also use power-
ful "medicines" to give themselves personal impressiveness, prestige
and authority among their people.

While in the families of commoners an ancestral spirit is only believed ⁷⁷¹
to affect the lives of his own descendants, the ancestors of a chief, on the ⁶²²
other hand, are supposed to influence, for good or ill, the fortunes of
whole chiefdoms. Rain and good crops, the fertility of women and
cattle are dependent upon their good will, which in its turn is believed to
depend upon a recurrent sacrifice of cows. And for this sacrifice the
chiefs, their living descendants, are responsible.²⁰ But, owing to the
continuous division of chiefdoms every generation, several chiefs are
concerned in each sacrifice; every dead chief is a source of misfortune or
of blessing in the countries of all his direct descendants. And so the
discussion of this part of the Nyakyusa religion leads us to the investiga-
tion of the groups which extend beyond the boundaries of a single chief-
chiefdom.

(c) *Groups wider than the Chiefdom*

When a chief dies he is buried near the house of his senior great wife ⁷⁷⁸
and trees are planted on his grave. The trees grow and form a sacred ⁷⁹³
grove (*elinyeto*) hedged by taboos. Each of these groves is at first the ⁷⁶⁴
religious centre of two, later of a number of chiefdoms, and in them the
sacrifices are made. Responsibility for finding the cow for sacrifice in a
particular grove rests with one of the living chiefs concerned, but respon-
sibility for initiating the ritual and performing it lies not only with the ^[22]
chiefs but also with the hereditary priests (*awanyaga*) in each chiefdom.
These hereditary priests are descended, some from the great commoners
of the dead chief who is buried in that particular grove, some from his
half-brothers. The ritual is esoteric, there is no gathering of the people
at the sacrifice, and only chiefs and those with hereditary priesthoods

²⁰ I am speaking here of the religious customs of the Nyakyusa proper and the
Selya people, I believe those of the Kukwa and Mwanika are very similar,
but I have not studied them in detail.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL CHARTER

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and Tutsi who established conquest states to the north-west.¹ 173

Whatever the origin and adventures of the heroes they were 773
important in Nyakyusa and Ngonde history because their [174]
graves became centres of religious ritual which linked together
groups that were otherwise largely independent. The myths
about them are the charter for chieftainship. They are depicted
as benefactors who brought to uncivilized men not only the
institution of chieftainship itself, but fire, cattle, iron, seed, and a
creative power resident in their own bodies and those of their
anointed heirs. But the myths also justify the power of commoners [778]
who first occupied the country and who have witchcraft in their [754] bellies:

The commoners whom Lwembe found here were extraordinary. They 539
were cultivators, but they had not yet got fire, they ate their food raw.
It was we chiefs, it was Lwembe, who brought fire and cattle—he came
and found the original occupants without cattle; hence the com-
moners say, 'We are the earth'. Commoners are different from us
physically, they are black; they are awe-inspiring, they are witches.
Before you Europeans came the chiefs like Mwaipopo (116) were not
awe-inspiring, they feared the commoners very much; the commoners
hammered the chief with their fists—yes, by daylight. And if the chief
cut a man's bananas that man took the chief's. If the commoners were
angry with Mwaipopo they fetched Mwangomo (124 whose chieftain- [177]
dom adjoins Mwaipopo's) at night by their witchcraft; he came in the night [754]
with his people and seized the cattle, both those of the chief, Mwaipopo, [643]
and those of the commoners. The next day the commoners said: 'It
is we, we are angry. Why do you not look after us? Why do you not
kill cattle for us?' Then Mwaipopo would kill two head of cattle and
all the men in the country ate. . . . Mwaipopo and his equals were not
awe-inspiring long ago, it is you Europeans who have created chief-
tainship and awe.

¹ cf. H. H. Curson and R. W. Thornton, 'A Contribution to the Study of African
Native Cattle', *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Industry*, vii, 2 [113]
October 1936 (Government Printer, Pretoria). An analysis of the distribution and
migration of breeds in Africa.

H. R. Thompson and R. Scott, *Uganda* (1935), pp. 195 ff.

Fulleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 68: 69.

M. Moser, *Die Maasi*, pp. 157 ff., 1904, Berlin.

H. H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, 1904, pp. 86, 105 (early photographs of
Nyasa cattle).

The short-horn type predominates among the Nyakyusa, but some animals suggest
an intermixture with Sanga cattle. The hump is regarded as a great delicacy and is
suggested in the clay cattle which boys model. Cf. Fulleborn, *op. cit.*, pl. 72. The
similarity between the ritual and symbolism of the Nyakyusa and those of the Ganda
as described by Rowce is marked. J. Rowce, *The Baganda*, 1911. [231]
[825]
[532]

THE 'DIVINE KINGS'

39

indicated (*vide supra*, p. 35). And, as we shall see later, he also suspected that his quarrels with the Kinga priests and with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom made him ill. [771] [753] [578]

Chiefs, and even the 'divine king' himself, lived in fear of the legitimate anger of their people, more particularly of their village headmen and priests, believing that such anger would bring them sickness, and this belief gave headmen and priests a very strong hold over their lord. How it worked was illustrated by an incident at Lubaga. [643] [753] [622]

Mwanjala II (78) remarked to Mwakilima (111): 'I sent to summon Mwasesi (a commoner priest) for the ritual tomorrow but he refused saying: "I shall not come." He is angry because he was not called to the ritual at your home, nor was he told formally when the Kinga came, or when Mwaipaja [G.W.] came.' Mwakilima (111) asked: 'Will you pay him?' [i.e. admit your mistake and offer him compensation]. Mwanjala replied that he would, and Mwakilima expressed disgust. One of the Kinga priests who was listening broke into the conversation: 'Ignore him if he refuses to come. If it were us we should leave him and celebrate without him, but you Nyakyusa are all witches, and you fear to ignore a man who refuses to come to a ritual saying that he will bewitch you. You are cowards, you are!' [776] [754]

At this Godfrey Wilson asked if there were no witchcraft in BuKinga. The Kinga priest replied: 'There is some, but if the chief gives orders to celebrate a ritual and someone refuses to come we ignore him, and celebrate without him. You Nyakyusa *pay* a man for doing wrong. A man refuses to come when he should and then you *pay* him! If you are afraid of witchcraft why not finish the ritual and send his portion of meat to him afterwards?'

Another priest objected: 'Then he would say it was too small a piece.'

The commoner priests then could control even the Lwembe (for Mwanjala II acted in the place of the Lwembe though he was not installed), but at the same time the mystical power of the Lwembe was feared both by ordinary chiefs and commoners. Mwaijonga (82), who ruled before the European occupation, insulted and sought Mwakisisya the Lwembe (56), and killed some of his men, because 'Lwembe had spoiled the year', but he sent back the cattle that were seized.

In the old days it did not matter killing the Lwembe's men (in war), but no one dared to take his cattle, they feared lest he would spoil the year and send too much rain, and a plague of ulcers, and cause the cattle to [727] [789]

THE RITUAL OF CHIEFTAINSHIP

57

married. Thus, yet another bond is forged between chief and headman, for he who provides marriage cattle is 'father' to him who marries, and the chief's wives acknowledge this by avoiding the village headmen of the senior generation as they do their father-in-law. Once the chief's ritual marriage is complete the sex taboo is lifted and such of his men as are already married are joined by their wives. In theory, though not nowadays in practice, the taboo is observed until the marriage of the chief. 643 583 [834]

All through the ritual of the 'coming out' the idea of a new beginning is expressed—a new site for the villages, new houses, new fire, new power for the young men. The events of this ritual, the seclusion, the lying on a litter, the prohibition on washing, washing with medicines in the doorway of the hut, the admonition, are directly parallel to the events of the rituals of death and puberty which, we have argued in a previous book,¹ are dramatizations of death and rebirth. There seems little doubt that the 'coming out' is yet another celebration of this theme. The young men enter an enclosed house—that of the senior's mother—and 'come out' (*ukusoka*) renewed as a child 'comes out' (*ukusoka*) of the mother's womb. No Nyakyusa informant volunteered such an interpretation, but, when it was suggested, it was eagerly accepted as expressing the real meaning of 'coming out'. 643 561 796 181

(b) THE CHIEF'S MEDICINES

Reference has already been made to medicines used by chiefs and by village headmen at the 'coming out' and we must now examine them more closely. The great medicines of chieftainship are *ifingila* and their function is to create *amanga*, i.e. spiritual power, and *ubusisya*, i.e. dignity, majesty, in order to make the chief fearful 'so that men obey him'. The medicines are comparable to robes of office for they are designed to give their user assurance and fill the commonality with awe. The Nyakyusa also think that chiefs and headmen should be 'heavy' with 'pythons' in their bellies' which give them the power to see and fight witches. Without such a 'python' a chief or village headman cannot fulfil his duty of 'watching over the country by day and by night' and if a man is not born with one he may develop it through the proper use of medicines. This notion has been examined elsewhere.² The *ifingila* medicines are also thought to give courage and ferocity (*ubugasi*) in war, with luck in seizing enemy 643 778 [787] [754]

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 205.² Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 97-102.

643 cattle and protecting one's own, and to attract men to the
778 country.

788 The two senior sons of a chief are given powdered *ikingila* to
643 drink from early childhood; at the 'coming out' they lie on it and
778 drink it again with their village headmen, some is buried beneath
their ritual trees, and the chief's homestead is treated with it
periodically. One form of *ikingila* is made of the heart of a lion and
the heart of a leopard, together with the scrapings from a charred
root, and one of its qualities is to create lions or leopards which
guard the trees under which it is buried. 'They make anyone who
has cut a branch of one of the trees for firewood tremble at night,
he trembles and returns the wood; they do not kill, but they stay
roaring there until he repents.' Now part of the dignity (*ubusiya*)
of a chief is that lions and leopards attend him; they roam his
country; they are his familiars (*imbege*). 'The sons of Lwembe'
[776] lack the fearful power of their great ancestor who 'rode a lion like a
donkey', but they are believed to command familiars which clear
the country of the wild pig that destroy men's gardens, and protect
the sacred groves by terrifying any sacrilegious person who dares
chop wood where he should fear. But they do not kill men or
cattle. That is what distinguishes them from 'God's lions which
kill cattle even by day' and the man-eaters made by sorcerers to
destroy those they hate. There is no hint of lycanthropy—our
● [754] informants denied emphatically that chiefs, dead or alive, turned
into *imbege*, but they 'follow the chief' when he travels.

A second *ikingila*, sprinkled on the chief's mat when he is
secluded, and drunk with his two senior village headmen, is
made of red, black, and shining white or yellow pebbles, which
are ground up and mixed with *imbinga*, a medicine brought by
the Kinga, but the symbolism of these ingredients remains
obscure.

The greatest of the *ifingila*, used only for the chief himself,
is *inyifuila*, a terrible substance with power perilously like that of
witchcraft. When either of the senior wives of a chief gives birth
[844] to a son a little is hidden in the litter on which she lies; it is put
into the litter on which the heirs lie at the 'coming out'; and into
the sacred tails and trumpets which are carried into battle. Like
other medicines of chieftainship, *inyifuila* is used to give the
chief majesty (*ubusiya*), 'that people who meet him may fear
him'; that he and his warriors may appear fierce; that they may
be 'heavy and strong' in war; that when the trumpet is blown it

THE RITUAL OF CHIEFTAINSHIP

59

may 'make the enemy fearful and sue for peace'; and that even men who have left his country may return to him. And it is so powerful that the dose must be carefully adapted to the individual. If a chief is already 'heavy' with an inherited python he is given the merest fragment, but a gentle fellow thought to be 'light', 'empty', is given more, that his words may carry weight. Too much will make a chief harsh (*akali*)—'he will always be beating men'—and he must be given an antidote to calm him down. Too much in the tails causes them to 'fly through the air at night, gleaming, and throttle the cows'. This is the danger of *inyifuila*, that it may act like the pythons in the bellies of witches and kill men and cattle. Controlled by a chief it is held to be reasonably safe, though Kalobo, Mwaipopo's (116) second wife, who was grumbling because no tail had been lodged in her house was told that she did not know how lucky she was for '*inyifuila* is very fearful—it enters the belly, it makes itself into familiars'.

The use of *inyifuila* is forbidden to commoners. In Ngonde, with its hierarchy of chiefs, it was the danger of attempting to equal one of superior rank that was emphasized. 'If a commoner sprinkles *inyifuila* on himself saying, "Let me surpass my fellows", and he meets a chief (who is entitled to use it) then he dies immediately because he said to himself, "I also am a chief"'; and 'If an Ngana chief dances and sprinkles his spear with *inyifuila* . . . and then meets Kyungu, he dies.' In the more democratic atmosphere of BuNyakyusa chiefs were 'very angry' if commoners used it, but it was the danger of its acting like witchcraft and throttling men and cattle and, eventually, its owner, that men spoke of most. We heard of half a dozen men—among them the most successful trader of Selya—who were reputed to use it 'to surpass their fellows' and 'get rich' and one case actually came to Court. Mwaipopo, the chief (116), raised the matter himself:

Why does this thing go about at night? I have seen it myself, it shines, I know it. It is that with which the doctors treat us chiefs to make us impressive [i.e. *inyifuila*]. Do you not know, you commoners, that we chiefs have prohibited its use in our countries? Ask your fellow Mandala! He is bad, he planted this thing, it kills you people.

So two village headmen went and called Mandala who lived near Ngulyo, and brought him to Court. There he was asked: 'Why did you keep this which kills people?' Mandala denied vehemently saying, 'I have not planted this.' But Mwaipopo

643 replied: 'Why does he deny it? He told me once: "I have a thing
778 which kills people!"' Then, turning to the man: 'Go and fetch it
719 out into the light.' Mandala went and we heard that he brought
[754] out another medicine, not the one asked for, he brought it to the
headmen and Mwaipopo. Mwaipopo (who, being a chief, knew
isyifwila) rejected the one Mandala brought saying: 'This is
not it.' Then Mandala brought out another and again the
chief rejected it saying: 'This is not the one we want.' Then he
brought out a little bag made of bark-cloth. They sought a doctor
to clear it out. All this happened in secret; we heard of it but did
not see it. But in Court Mwaipopo turned Mandala out of his
country 'because he had admitted that he was wicked', and
Mwaipopo reminded the other chiefs in Court of a previous case
of a man in Mwangomo's country who had used this medicine.

Isyifwila is made out of a python 'as thick as a man's thigh'
which has been killed by crawling over razors. In Ngonde we
were told:

A certain snake they call *ngwe* is killed in the hills to the west. They
build a hut, closed, with a man inside ringing a cow bell and razors
all over the roof. The snake comes and crawls over the roof, trying to
get in and so dies. Then the doctors come to 'close it up'. When they
have done so they cut it up for medicine—*isyifwila*; some is brought to
Kyungu direct . . . some is taken to the doctors, and it is the doctors
who give it to the chief.

[925] A similar story was told in BuNyakyusa but they got their
isyifwila from the Sangu and Hche, to the north and east, not
from the west, and in their account the trap was baited with a
goat, not a man, and it was the blood of the python (*iseta*) shed
on the surrounding grass and on the trap itself which was used for
medicine. To test the medicine the doctors gave a little to a
[177] chicken; if the chicken died the medicine was satisfactory; and
the remains of the chicken were burnt and the ashes used as
treated *isyifwila*.

[175] That snake is awful (*niye ffo*), no one approaches to kill it.
No! If it were speared everyone would die.' And because the
python which is so terrible is thought to be linked with the rain-
bow it, too, is disliked. 'We fear the rainbow very much, we say
[821] it appears when a python looks up to the sky; if we are near a
river we run from it for pythons live near rivers. . . . No, we are
not mistaken, it is so.' The essential quality of the python is
adwisa (fearfulness, majesty, dignity) and this is what is required

643 and Mwaipopo and Kisogeta smeared it over the tails which
 778 were then put out with the horns to dry in the sun. Mwaipopo
 789 suggested getting Mwaityelaga, the doctor, to treat them
 further, and the others agreed saying: 'Let Mwaipopo find some-
 one, that the earth may be good, that it be heavy.' Njobakosa
 had spoken earlier of the cattle giving much milk after the
 treatment of the tails. And they went on to discuss the fact that
 the young chief Mwankuga II (131) had begotten no child by the
 wife inherited from his elder brother (150) whose place he had
 taken. Thus the function of the chief in creating plenty and
 [842] fertility was in the priests' minds, and there may be some link
 between the virility of the chief and success in war—one inform-
 ant spoke of the chief's senior wives jumping over the tails
 immediately after the consummation of their marriage—but
 of this we are not certain. What is common knowledge is that the
 tails are 'for sciring cattle', and they are associated with 'manure
 and blood'. We were told at the conclusion of the ritual: 'Formerly
 we should have gone tomorrow, after this treating of the tails, to
 fight.'

Besides medicines for majesty, courage, and popularity as rulers,
 chiefs use medicines to protect themselves against the fearfulness
 of the groves in which they sacrifice, medicines to 'close the
 country to hunger', to make their capitals grand, and to cause
 thieves who have stolen, to walk round and round until caught.

Medicines are regarded as essential to authority, victory, and
 successful rule, and the kind used and the dose given are adjusted
 to the status and character of the individual. 'Village headmen
 [622] do not drink the most important *itigile*; they drink a lesser one,
imilaga; the senior headman is given most, the junior less.' And
 the chief's wives do not drink *itigile* at all, but only a powder
 suitable for them. But the use of these medicines has its dangers.
 The chief, like other people who have been drinking protective
 medicines, does not eat the new crops grown on fields fertilized
 ● [754] by ash without fortifying himself. The danger is said to come from
 the burnt rubbish heaps, because medicines for defence against
 witches and sorcerers are burnt in them and, as we have seen,
 certain of the medicines which the chief uses create a power akin
 to witchcraft. He tastes the new millet ritually in June, the cow
 [789] peas in September, and pumpkin leaves in November; and he also
 tastes the 'new earth' at the break of the rains in October or early
 November. 'We chiefs fear that the medicines we have drunk will

643 over the country by day and by night', and power (*amanga*)
 778 to see the enemies of darkness (that is, the witches) is thought to
 622 come to each priest or village headman from a python in his
 belly. No one can fulfil his duties as a ruler and defender unless he
 is 'heavy', but to have a python inside one is also the mark of a
 witch. Pressed on the point the Nyakyusa hold that a chief or
 ● [759] village headman only has one python whereas witches have
 several, but this distinction is not maintained consistently, and
 many of our informants were agreed that the power of witchcraft
 and the power to see and fight witches were one and the same.
 The essential distinction lies in the use to which the power is put;
 wrongly used it is 'witchcraft' (*abuleni*); rightly used to defend the
 village or to punish evil-doers it is 'the breath of men' (*imale* or
hale) and how any particular case is labelled depends upon the
 viewpoint of the speaker. The victim of a misfortune and his kin
 will indignantly attribute it to 'witchcraft' when other people
 regarded it as due to his wrongdoing and a punishment brought
 about by 'the breath of men'.

Each village headman, together with those of the village who
 are 'heavy', is thought competent both to defend those of his
 village whom he judges innocent against witches from outside or
 within, and to punish wrong-doers, by bringing upon them the
 chill of fever. Hence those who have angered their neighbours and
 believe themselves to be attacked by 'witches', take refuge in
 another village.

The power of witchcraft is believed to be inherited, rarely
 acquired; but the power of defence is both inherited and in-
 creased by drinking medicines, and there seems little doubt that
 the medicines drunk by chief and village headmen at the 'coming
 out' to create in themselves *abuleni*—majority, awareness—also
 develop *amanga*, the power to see and fight witches. Indeed, one
 of our Christian informants insisted that *abuleni* is *buleni*—
 'awareness is witchcraft'.

These ideas have been discussed in some detail elsewhere.¹
 Here I am only concerned to show the importance of the belief in
 'the breath of men' in the relationship between chief and village
 headmen. Not only do village headmen have the ultimate power of
 life and death over their chief, but they are thought to bring
 illness upon him if he acts unconstitutionally or disregards their
 advice, or fails in his duty of providing beef for his men. He may

¹ Maudslayi Wilson, *God Country*, pp. 90-123.

THE RITUAL OF CHIEFTAINSHIP

67

play one village against another and go to sleep in that section of the country which supports him, but he dare not anger all his headmen. In the same way a village headman dare not anger the main body of his men. In short, public opinion is an effective sanction because those in authority believe that the disapproval of their fellows may bring a fever or paralysis upon them. One of our Christian informants was insistent that, were it not for the belief in the 'breath of men', pagan chiefs and headmen would act tyrannically.

The situations in which a chief or headman fears the breath of men are very varied. We have already referred to the chief who thought his illness was due to his refusal to hold the 'coming out' for his sons when advised to do so.¹ Mwaipopo, before whose court a very bitter land dispute between two of his villages had been brought, refused to give judgement and was careful to sleep in the village that had possession of the land, and therefore less cause for anger.² Kasile, the hereditary priest of the chief's lineage who counted as 'a chief' as opposed to 'a commoner', thought he had angered the village headmen of his generation (who had become priests) by not providing meat for them (*vide infra*, p. 105).

The headmen are responsible for the health of their chief and it is they who go to consult an oracle if he is ill and take him to a doctor. Mwankunga II (151), heir to Mwaipopo's chieftom, had not begotten a son by any of the wives he inherited from his elder brother who had died. His village headmen³ went to consult an oracle and were told that it was the wrath (*imide*) of his father; so they reported the matter to Mwaipopo, who sent a junior kinsman to consult another oracle. The diagnosis was confirmed and Mwaipopo gathered his younger brothers and prayed and told the shades that he had no quarrel with his kinsmen. Then he told the village headmen to take Mwankunga to a doctor for treatment, but this they did not do, so that Mwankunga went to consult a doctor on his own. According to Kasile it was because the headmen had not taken Mwankunga that the medicine did not work. 'They should take him to the doctor and be present in dreams, to watch over him in dreams.' What the headmen were angry about was not revealed—there was no obvious cause.

¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 130-5.² *op. cit.*, pp. 106-9.³ Mwankunga I who died had 'many sons' before Mwankunga II inherited from him, but Mwaipopo (156) continued to rule as chief and drew a Government salary.

As we have seen, the chief's fearsome medicine *ipipila* is thought to be very dangerous, and too much in the tails may cause them 'to fly about throttling men and cattle', but a chief is never accused of working witchcraft; it is inconceivable to the Nyakyusa that he could be. If the tails have got out of hand they are treated by a doctor 'to close them up'; no one suggests that the chief should get rid of them. It is commoners, 'black people', who are witches—cannibals, the eaters of raw flesh—as opposed to chiefs who, since the dawn of history, have killed cattle for meat and cooked their food like civilized men. But the distinction does not extend very far; junior kinsmen of the chief are 'commoners' and may well be accused of practicing witchcraft.

There was a delicate balance of power in the Nyakyusa constitution between hereditary chief and commoner headmen and the belief in the power of medicines and of witchcraft was an integral part of it. The chief provided fruitfulness by the power of his own body and his medicines; all men depended upon him for their well-being—food, cattle, children, success in war; but he in his turn depended upon the goodwill of his men led by their village headmen; without it he shivered and fell ill, only to be buried by them 'with the breath still in his body' lest the power of growth disappear with his breathless corpse.

Something of the quality of this mutual dependence and fear is conveyed in Kaitile's account of his own illness quoted in Chapter VIII.

(c) THE NECESSITY FOR HARMONY

The welfare of the chiefdom is thought to depend upon harmony between the chief and his village headmen and priests, and also between the chief and his kinsmen. Any friction between them may result in public misfortune as well as sickness to the individual at fault. The quarrel of Kaitile, the priest, first with the Kiaga priests, and then with the commoner priests of Mwaipope's chiefdom was believed to affect the crops and the weather, as well as Kaitile's own health (*id. ipfa*, pp. 124-41), and Mwaipope's failure to tell Kaitile formally of the death of their kinsman led to rain which spoiled the funeral dance. A quarrel between the lineages of two chiefs which should have sacrificed together was said to have been followed by a very poor millet crop (*id. ipfa*, pp. 79-80, 118, 156).

How the personal relationship of a chief with his kinsmen is

THE RITUAL OF CHIEFTAINSHIP

69

thought to affect the whole country was illustrated in Mwailhojo's⁶⁴³ chiefdom where the people were plagued by wild pig destroying⁶⁰² their gardens. Mwailhojo (147) had a longstanding quarrel with⁵⁷⁸ his half-brother, Mwakyonde (148), whose country he had seized after their 'coming out'. Mwakyonde became famous as a doctor, and he was a great raconteur and beer-drinker, a regular Silenus,^[57] the boon companion of many influential men, whereas his brother was cold and irascible; so although he had lost his chieftaincy, Mwakyonde had considerable power. In February 1937, four lions were seen in the adjoining chiefdom of Mwaipopo (116), and we heard pig squealing as it was killed. Angombwike (whose father lived near Mwakyonde in Mwailhojo's country) explained to us: 'People say that these are Mwakyonde's lions. . . . Lion-makers have bundles of twigs which they put into the long grass, and which turn into lions. Long ago Mwakyonde made lions and they came and killed all the pigs, and the country (Mwailhojo's) was at peace, but he quarrelled with Mwailhojo and put his bundles of twigs into his box and locked it up. Then the country was filled with pig, and buck, and elephant, and all the crops were spoiled, and so it is still. Now Mwakyonde has begun to be friendly with Mwaipopo (116); they enjoy each other's company and drink beer together, and so he is making lions again in Kipunga, the land where Mwaipopo is hoeing, to kill the pig for Mwaipopo. They say Mwaipopo has given him a country in secret.' Now Mwailhojo claimed as his the forest country, which Mwaipopo's men had begun to colonize, therefore to aid Mwaipopo there was an effective slap at Mwailhojo. The lions came into Mwailhojo's country—we heard them repeatedly close to our camp—but they did not clear the pig.

Then, in March, Mwakyonde was supposed to be using a new medicine he had obtained to scare off pig from the fields. We asked him about it. 'Oh, it has failed. The pigs are still there eating. I've done everything I should but without effect. I think that the pigs are possessed by the shades (*nii niminda ngulule*).'^[778] 'Why?' we asked. 'Because my elder brother (Mwailhojo) and I are not on good terms (*niihumbule kama*) the shades are angry.'^[775]

So the destruction of men's gardens was traced to the quarrel between the chief and his brother.

62 | the chief himself. The members of each village co-operate in some
 56 | measure in cultivation and herding and they form a defensive
 63 | group against attack 'by day and by night'—i.e. against armed
 raiders and witches.¹ But there is no great elaboration of ritual
 for single villages. Such village rituals as occur are connected with
 defence against witchcraft and involve driving out a supposed
 witch, or receiving back a member who has fled from fear of
 witchcraft, or protecting the village fields against witches.²
 Most communal rituals are organized on the basis of the chiefdom
 or group of chiefdoms, and villages or sections participate as
 segments of the chiefdom.

The principle of generation and that of section hold one
 another in check. All those who have 'come out' together have
 a strong sense of unity as opposed to the generations of their
 fathers and sons, but every generation is split into two sections
 each led by an heir of the chief, and these sections have a certain
 territorial solidarity. It is common in Africa for organized age-
 groups to cut across kinship and territorial groups. The Nyakyusa
 peculiarity lies in the territorial unity of age-sets which occupy
 villages, and the manner in which the disparous tendencies with-
 in a chiefdom have a constitutional outlet in the rivalry between
 the sections of a ruling generation which become independent at
 the 'coming out' of the next generation.

The combination of the hereditary and selective principles of
 leadership among the Nyakyusa is also somewhat different from
 that among their neighbours. With many Central African people
 the heir to the holder of the office of village headman or chief is
 selected, and the most capable member of a given lineage or lineage
 segment appointed.³ Among the Nyakyusa succession is precisely
 defined and there is no selection of a suitable heir except to the
 supreme and greatly feared office of 'divine king', but the selective
 principle is given full scope in the 'teaching' of leaders to the
 young men's villages at every 'coming out'. It is this combination
 of the hereditary and selective principles which binds together
 chiefs and commoners and successive generations. The rules of

¹ Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 44-46, 91-107.

² *op. cit.*, pp. 52-4, 109 ff., 154-6, 270-4.

³ I. Combs, 'Headmanship and Ritual of Loango Villages', *Africa*, xiii (1936), p. 111; M. G. Marwick, 'The Social Context of Cross Witch Belief', *Africa*, xii (1952), pp. 219-22; V. Turner, 'Ntombi Village Structure', *Africa*, xiv (1954), pp. 103-4; J. C. Mitchell, *The Fan Village, Mandinka* (1956), pp. 137-69.

CHAPTER VII

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

- 769 SACRIFICES to the heroes and the shades of the chiefs are holy and private—only a handful of priests and chiefs may enter the groves and the details of the rituals are not discussed with other people. But there are other celebrations in which everyone participates; these are the rituals for cleansing the community—
 776 throwing out the rubbish' (*shajila shilaga*)—more specifically
 783 the ash from all the hearths.

In Ngunde the cleansing is organized for the whole kingdom, from Mhande, but among the Nyakyusa each chiefdom acts independently. Traditionally, we were told, the *shajila shilaga* was an annual celebration, observed at the 'new year', after the break of the rains, but it could also take place if there were much sickness in the country, or plague, or prophecies of evil to come. It was celebrated (in an attenuated form and by a section of the community only) in Ngunde in July 1937, to cleanse the country of a plague of rats, and in September of the same year a somewhat similar ritual was performed in Furekoto's chiefdom because a

- [787] fearful omen had been seen—a ground hornbill had eaten a chicken. The annual celebrations had been dropped both in
 [178] Ngunde and BuNyakyusa before 1935.

- As has been shown in the *Rituals of Kinship* the Nyakyusa believe
 [769] that too close an association with the shades is dangerous; all the family rituals are designed to drive them away, to drive them out of the bodies of the mourners, or menstruating girls, or parents of twins; and the purpose of 'throwing out the ashes' in all the households is consequently the same. The shades 'come to warm themselves' at the hearths of their descendants, they 'bring sickness to the hearths' and so the old ashes are cleared out and new fire is
 [785] lighted. The phrase *shajila shilaga* is used in Ngunde for clearing out the litter (*shajila*) after a burial, or an initiation ritual, and for shaving after a ritual, as well as for clearing the ashes from all the hearths in the country.

- [754] It is also thought that domestic fires are contaminated by
 [775] witches who may have cooked the human flesh they steal over their victims' own fires. In Ngunde it was the connexion between

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

103

the shades and the hearths which was stressed; in Pwankoto's country people talked mostly of the witches; but it seemed clear that both conceptions were present when men murmured: 'The hearth bricks are bad' (*amafu mabili*) and they sought to cleanse them by clearing out the old fire and lighting new. 'To clear out the ashes means they take away all that dirt, the dirt which the witches have brought and the shades; it is the cause of illness.' When witches are thought to be active there is also a public complaint, and a public warning is given 'to whom it may concern' to desist.¹ This occurred in the ritual after the ground hornbill had eaten the chicken. Above all, men must admit their anger to one another: 'they fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. The theme so familiar in Nyakyusa rituals—that quarrels must be confessed if they are to be composed—recurs yet again. Though we distinguish the rituals for 'cleansing the country' from sacrifices, on the ground that the whole community participates in the 'cleansing' while the sacrifice is esoteric, the two are closely linked, and a sacrifice commonly precedes or follows the cleansing. We turn now to the detailed accounts of celebrations for 'cleansing' in Ngondo and among the Kukwa.

(a) THE RATS

In Ngondo they used to clear out the ashes at the new year, at the first hoeing (in December) after 'the break of the rains'. They feared that death and disease would spread through the land if they continued living with the old fires, that the shades in the earth, both the shades of chiefs and of commoners, would be angry. Let them drive the shades away and hoe in peace. They always remembered to do so each new year; for the old men used to keep these things in mind continually, they never forget. The Kyungu would summon the whole country to clear out the ashes; and then they would hoe in peace. And at other times, too, if prophecy came on someone, they would clear out the ashes again. 'It is to drive away the shade with the sickness that he brings. We throw out the ashes and firebrands because he has come to warm himself over the fire in our houses, we throw out the pots and welcoming baskets because he has come to see us eating; let him go home (to the grove) and eat what he asked for—we say the shades ask for food—let him eat here, perhaps a sheep. We say the shades bring sickness to the fire, hence we throw out the ashes and make new fire with a drill.'

The nobles of Ngondo approached the Kyungu and he gave

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Chief Gwagwa*, pp. 129-32.

CLEANING THE COUNTRY

107

MWAPULA: Indeed, may the illness not be great, may the children not cry by night, may the cattle increase, and the fields be fertile, and the fowls also increase. May children sleep. Our fathers always continued in the house. Now we are shocked at what is happening. 783
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MWAMUNDA: We say thank you, chief, you do not forget us. Let the sickness pass and go away, may the cattle sleep, and you women, may the children grow. May the fields be fertile; may there not be cry of one another. We are sorry because there is much illness. Our fathers say "Why have the chiefs turned round?"

MWAMUNDA: Chief, we beg you, we thank you, indeed there is sickness. Is there anyone who says in their quarter there is much sickness (more than elsewhere)? Do we say something about sickness?

MWAMUNDA: No, Mwampiki, all of us who have come here are sick.

KUMENI: Yes, we are all eating.

Mwamambo commenting on this explained:

If there is sickness one may admit and say, 'It is I, I was angry on account of such and such.' Yes, indeed, they confess openly, because he who sees in his belly (=knows in his heart) that 'It is I who have done this' trembles when his fellows speak many words thinking, 'Perhaps they have seen me.' So he confesses. When he confesses he escapes, they only grumble at him saying, 'Don't do it again.' If someone admits the others say, 'It is he, but we have punished him.' I think that even in the old days he was not driven out, because they hope that, if he has confessed, the illness he caused will go away.

MWAMUNDA: Have you ever before heard of a hornbill eating a hen? We are horrified. Even the prophets did not speak of such an event. [787]

AMUKWA: Indeed, it has never before happened, we are glad that our chiefs have taken the initiative with these words.

AMUKWA: For this custom is old, it began long ago in the time of our fathers. It is the custom to give hope in the homestead, that we may grow strong.

MWAMUNDA: Always, if the chief is ill it is said, 'Where are you, oh people?' All the homesteads watch over the chief when he is ill. [Mwamambo commenting: It is said that people have the work of watching over their chief that no one may breach him, hence when he is ill they reproach people saying: 'Where are you?' Let the old customs be observed now (implying that they have left all the old customs and hence there is much sickness in the country).] [784]
[777]

AMUKWA: There are some who say 'Let so-and-so die that I may move into his homestead. Let every which brings sickness also go away.'

AMUKWA: If sickness appears let us tell the chief that we may all express our unhappiness together, asking where the illness has come from, then it will be light, if we all grumble together. [Mwamambo commenting: [788]

and women, it is generative power, fertility. That power is constantly expelled from the belly but returns again and by that expulsion and return men live.

There was a great deal of criticism from the conservatives because no sacrifice had been made.

Mwamuna: Now people are talking much saying, 'We have abandoned that which they did formerly, we are doing something else.' People have many dreams (gesture head on hand as if heavy with anxiety), many say: 'I have dreamed of the dead, they told me to sacrifice a cow, to pray, we did not pray properly, that is useless, it will not effect anything.' So we have told the chief saying: 'Let us kill a cow at the grave of Mwachana,' he has agreed, but the cow has not yet come.

Formerly, on the night following the day of the prayer we should have eaten the sacrificial cow, the chief would have killed two cows and the headmen from different villages would have come and eaten by night, and drunk beer provided by the chief, in the house of the senior wife of the chief. . . . They ate a little meat, raw, the rest they roasted. Then in the morning, when they had eaten and were satisfied, they would go to clear out the house, to throw out the ash, and to

pray, as we prayed now, and to make new fire by friction in the pasture land. The village headman made fire with medicine which the chief gave him, the name of the medicine is Mbanda, it's a tree. To throw out the ash means to clear out all the filth, the filth which the witches and the shades have brought to us—the filth that is sickness. . . . Do not the witches eat meat at the fire? Human flesh? Some roast at your fire your bodies which they have seized, some go home with the human flesh to their own fires, hence comes the filth of the ashes. The village headman eat the sacrificial meat at night with the shades, they celebrate for them with the blood which goes beneath. . . .

If the chief has done something wrong, then these above [i.e. the village headmen] pray to those beneath saying, 'Let us help one another to punish him who has strayed, but we do not wish that he should die, let him be ill; perhaps then he will seek something to nourish us.' Again the night before the throwing out of the ash they calm their anger and say: 'You beneath, this our child (the chief) has remembered us, there is no accusation against him now, may sickness go away from the country, and children sleep, let us all sleep and the cows calve. We greet those beneath.' In my childhood I was extremely surprised at night when my father came in, he had a little parcel of meat. 'Where have you been?' I asked. 'We have been praying.' But since I grew up and became a village headman, and was rewarded as such [by the administration] we have never seen sacrificial meat.

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

111

Mwandiisi made a great deal of the fact that at the 'throwing out of the rubbish' the village headmen ate meat raw.

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[242]

Formerly . . . we threw away the ashes and charred brands . . . that is to drive away the shades who warm themselves over the hearth in the house; they bring us sickness, let them warm themselves over there in the long grass! Also in the long grass there we killed meat, and the priests ate it raw: no one saw them doing that there in the long grass; we went by day with drums, people from all the homesteads, a moving multitude . . . then we came home . . . the priests remained with their wives, they threw away their bark-cloths, they cut off morsels of meat and ate them raw. Because the priests are witches it is they who ate raw meat before we chiefs came, the priests are witches. . . . The witches and shades gather and bring sickness together, we kill a cow in the grove, we drive them away. No, they do not eat raw meat in the grove, they cook it. But at the capital if the chief has killed a cow for men to eat the priests eat meat raw. We have seen them. I, Mwandiisi, have seen Mwaingo and Kalambo the senior village headmen eating raw meat at my place and my wives have seen them also.

[753]

[193]

'Yes', said one of his wives, 'we saw them and we ran away saying: "Well! Fancy doing it openly!"' Mwandiisi continued:

The senior village headmen are witches, children of those who ate raw food long ago. Some village headmen only rush to eat a cow we have killed, but some go to eat a person; those are the witches who eat raw meat!

[754]

The function of a chief is to feed his men on beef, and in doing so he placates the witches who are commoners and who, like their forefathers, prefer their meat raw. If they do not get beef then the witches eat men.¹

[43]

(c) SMALLPOX

The prayer and 'clearing out of the rubbish', traditionally celebrated before an approaching epidemic, was described by an elderly Christian, Fibombe. It illustrates very clearly the combination of practical precaution— isolation—and magical protection, and also the idea that sickness was brought into the country by witches.

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When the chief had heard that smallpox was coming, or dysentery, he said, 'Let us pray'. Before my baptism I saw it, in the country of the

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *One Country*, pp. 92-4.

796 Penja chief, Mwalukasa. He called all his people because he heard that
 783 smallpox was coming and said: 'Let us pray.' And he called his fellow
 753 chiefs, those of the same lineage, and said: 'Let this illness not come,
 may it go to other chiefs. . . . Listen! I am the chief! We have heard
 that smallpox is approaching, who is here who rejoices at his approach?
 Who is here who wishes that it should kill us?'
 THE CHIEF: We, we do not rejoice that it is coming, we reject it, chief
 Mwalukasa, may it pass by this homestead.

THE COMMONERS: And we also reject it, may it pass by our homesteads.
 MWALUKASA: And I, I reject it, may smallpox not come into our country.

If there be one who has relatives in a chiefdom where there is smallpox
 and they come to call him to a funeral let them stay at a distance, and
 not sleep here, let him not go near until the illness has passed by, at
 the end of the year. If you witches go to fetch it, you will kill your
 fellows with whom you are chatting now. You will not enjoy my
 company or build with me, the chief, if you go and bring in smallpox
 and kill your fellows. We pray that it may pass. [For it is believed in
 this country that the witches go to bring in illness, or wild animals,
 from a distance.]

THE COMMONERS: Yes, indeed, may it pass by.

MWALUKASA: If you go to bury a brother in a country in which there is
 smallpox stand afar off, tie the cow you bring to a tree and call to
 them: 'Here is my cow for killing, come and take it.' Take your cow,
 but do not go into the homestead.

And the people did as he said. Then he told them to get ready for
 the ritual. He took his calabash cup and three other chiefs with
 calabash cups followed him. They blew water and prayed to Kyala
 and the shades. Then the people were gathered together; and the
 chiefs, led by Mwalukasa, ran round facing each group in turn and
 blowing out water towards them; the men held their shields in front
 of them and when the chiefs blew they shook their shields violently, as
 if fighting.

When all was finished then Mwalukasa said: 'When you go home,
 [372] throw out the ashes and the fire; all make new fire with dolls.' And
 they all did this.

Finally he had bamboos planted with medicine on the main roads
 between BuPenja and BuKakwe and BuPenja and BuNyika. No one
 [755] ill with smallpox, or who had been in contact with smallpox, was
 allowed to pass, unless he had been ill and recovered. I saw the one
 bamboo clump on the boundary of Nyika and Penja country. No one
 passed it, it was very sacred (Isipe Ape).

As in cultivation there was a combination of ritual and science.

CHAPTER IX

KASITILE THE PRIEST

We turn now from the description of rituals to a personal document, an account of the illness of Kasitile (86), the leading priest of Selya, the causes suggested for it, and the rituals performed. His case shows: (i) the power of village headmen over chiefs in general, more particularly the power of the commoner priests (village headmen) of the previous generation over hereditary priests of the chief's lineage; (ii) the persistent linking of misfortune with sin in both public and private life; (iii) the function of divination in selecting between possible causes of disease; (iv) the influences of Christian and Muslim teaching and Western medical science on a conservative who goes so far as to invite a Muslim to cut the throat of the sacrificial animal and speaks of turning Christian in his old age; and (v) the very great importance attached to 'speaking out' (*adavaga*) and not leaving anger to smoulder unconfessed. Beer is necessary for such a ritual 'speaking out' and the participants are pressed to drink deep, for is *siswa*.

The dramatic persons are:

- KASITILE (86) of the chief's lineage, priest of Selya [551]
- JANE his senior and favourite wife [755]
- JANE'S YOUNGER SISTER and co-wife [756]
- KILULELA a third wife suspected of bewitching Kasitile
- MWAIPOPO (116) the chief and senior kinsman of Kasitile
- MWAEVONDE (148) the doctor who was treating Kasitile
- KINDA priests (i.e. Kikungubeja Nyanigwa, Kyamba Kitall, side pp. 24-24)
- NOULUTO } Village headmen of Mwajonga (82) and priests of
- NYUMORIMA } his grove, side pp. 74-7, 84-5
- KIMODOTA }
- MWAMARINDA THE ELDER a hereditary priest, assistant to Kasitile
- MWAMARINDA THE YOUNGER (Mwambagije) son of the elder who often acted in his place

FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

KASITILE THE PRIEST

125

illness to neglect of his duty to the Kings. All the time we were 793
in BuNyakyusa he was ailing—possibly he suffered from tuber- 755
culosis—and one wrongdoing after another was suggested as the [753]
cause of his illness.

His case is intelligible only in terms of the conception of 'the
breath of men', that is, a power akin to witchcraft thought to be [754]
legitimately exercised by village headmen and others to punish
wrongdoers, but which is referred to by the victims as 'witchcraft'.
This has been discussed at length elsewhere.¹

On 2nd July 1955, Kasitile had left his own house and was 793
living with a friend in a neighbouring village. His doctor, Mwa- 754
kyonde, said that he was being 'throttled by the wi'-her' and had
invited him to come and reconfect himself (*akwipakaye*) in the
tranquillity of a village of another chiefdom in which there were
many people with spiritual power (*alamanga*) so that 'the witches'
could not get at him. This is a common precaution in case of
illness, for witches are thought not to have power ordinarily
outside their own villages and never beyond the chiefdom.²

The cause of the illness was explained as follows: Kasitile had
quarrelled with Kiamguta, the commoner priest, and others of the {578}
principal men of the country, because he had found them drinking {753}
the sacred beer (*akwilema*), brewed after the millet harvest (*nde
naye*, pp. 84-5) without telling him, or sending him the pot
which was his due. They invited him to drink, but he refused and
they each sent him 12. to beg pardon. Kasitile bought beer with
one of the shillings and called the senior commoner priest,
Ngulyo, and his fellows to drink saying, 'I was angry, friends, you
'overstepped' me' (i.e. they had ignored his rights). He himself {659}
should have brewed when he confessed his anger, and slaughtered
a calf or prepared food for them as well, but he had bought only
one shilling's worth of beer and provided nothing himself. Then,
when they had drunk, Kasitile fell ill. Hence it was said that the
commoner priests were angry and 'ate' (i.e. bewitched) him.
Kasitile's own comment was: 'The fault lies with the young
priests (Ngulyo, a young man, had inherited his father's position),
they are useless as priests . . . I was not told of that ritual beer, yet
the medicine comes from me, from this house where I keep it.
They should have come to me to get it and put it with the millet {731}
in the holy pot. They drank the beer without medicine. It is they {759}
who have brought cold and hunger on the country. I think the

¹ Monica Wilson, *Chief Country*, pp. 91-101, 187-9.² *op. cit.*, pp. 100-2.

793 trouble is that Mwalopo (the chief 116) is getting old. . . .
 754 Here Kasile suggested two different causes for the scarcity in the
 731 country: (a) the negligence of the priests, and (b) the senility of the
 769 chief. In the old days Mwalopo would have been smothered, as
 Angombwika explained (*vide supra*, p. 63).

753 On the 9th, Kasile, much troubled by his cough at night,
 757 expressed a great desire for the return of the missionary nurse to
 Kabembe hospital. 'She is killing us by her absence, the black
 people don't know anything about these things, only the Euro-
 peans. Why, I went there and the dresser just gave me an injection
 without taking my temperature—no European ever does that.'

757 The following day he sent off his sons with 10 c. to inquire about
 753 his case from a diviner. The diviner said: 'The wives at his home
 are gossiping to other people about their husband. People want
 the husband's body to be light. It is not Jane, because she is his
 favourite, but the others.' Kasile said:

I shan't do anything, I said 'Let's leave it.' I am still in Banda [the
 village to which he moved for safety]. Mwakunda is giving me medi-
 cine for my disease. It drives out the cold which is in my body. Yes, the
 cold is the breath of the witches coming to trouble me—it's due to my
 755 wives' gossip. But it started as a quarrel with other people [con-
 753 siderations] first. One day I went to drink beer in Bajaga and that night
 I fell sick; that is how it began. Men are complaining because I, a
 chief, a senior, do not cook food for them. They trouble me on that
 account. They say: 'Let us see whether he is really a chief, a senior.'
 But others say: 'He has done no wrong.' Yes, the sickness took me on
 the way home from the beer. Perhaps Kpala asked: 'What has he
 756 done?' and found I had done no wrong. If there had not been a Kpala
 who says as I would have been dead.

756 When I consulted a diviner he struck a spear and looked along it,
 767 then he said: 'The disease now is from his wives—the earlier attack
 was from men, but this one is from his wives. When they gather at the
 hearth they say: "Come hither, we see him where he sleeps."'

758 'Are the wives witches?' we asked.

759 Kasile replied:

753 Yes. They say: 'There is a favourite, we are not beloved.' If a man's
 wives are good the witches can get into the house, but their cold breath
 dissipates quickly; you are given medicine and recover quickly; but
 if the wives are bad they gather together the medicine and press it
 down, so that it is powerless. One of my wives is very bad, her lineage
 is bad, it is she who calls to her aid the heavy ones, the witches. The

KASITILE THE PRIEST

127

younger one¹ gossips with her fellow, she does not go to the witches herself, but just talks to the other wife who calls the witches to her aid. These two wives say: 'The favourite has borne many children to her husband; we are poor' [i.e. the favourite gets an unfair share of her husband's attentions].

Kasitile speaks of his wives as 'witches' which, according to Nyakyusa ideas, they were, if they injured him, but he was also in the wrong to have shown his preference for Jane so clearly. As was shown in *Rituals of Kinship*, the shades are thought to punish such favouritism.

Towards the end of August Kasitile went to consult Ndembwe, a diviner and doctor, living nearly a day's journey away in the hills, who used a 'stick in the ground' as a divining rod. On his return Kasitile reported:

Ndembwe says it's the 'breath of men', not the wives, but the dispute about the beer. I paid him 12, and drank three preparations of medicine at his place. He is coming here—I have found some beer and I am sending to call him tomorrow. Then Kasitile added confidentially: About the source of the 'breath' I am uncertain. Ndembwe suggested testing my wives. He can see the heavy ones, for in Ndali country he has drunk much medicine to give him spiritual power (*amanga*). He told me to come home, not to go back to Mwakyonde's country, and he is coming to give me medicine to drink and also to sprinkle medicine in the house. He will sleep here and see who it is that comes—he will know if the wives are heavy, or if it is the people of the country.

Kasitile's uncertainty was apparent. The first diviner had stated clearly that the sickness came from the witchcraft of the wives, but Kasitile wanted a further test.

We were away from Selya for some time and did not hear of any further developments in Kasitile's illness until early in 1957. By then a new reason for his ill-health had been put forward, viz. his impiety in cutting all the branches off a tree growing at the entrance to a sacred grove which has sprung up over his father's grave. He cut the tree because it was encroaching on his homestead. Then he fell ill and he went to consult Ndembwe again.

He asked me: 'Have you done something wrong at home?' I replied: 'No, I have done nothing wrong.' 'But the oracle says you have done wrong at home.' I said: 'Perhaps it is because I cut a tree at the

¹ Sister of the favourite Jane. To accuse Jane's sister would cast a slur on Jane, for witchcraft is normally hereditary.

KASITILE THE PRIEST

131

KASITILE: Yes indeed.

SANGU: Now your body is sick, you are coughing.

KASITILE: Yes indeed, I am ill, and I am coughing a great deal.

SANGU: Yes, it is that quarrel down there. You came with the cough from the plain.

KASITILE: Yes, I came with it.

SANGU: You are a priest, you are a senior priest. (He knew this himself)

KASITILE: Yes indeed.

SANGU: But the cough comes from the quarrel in the plain. If you were not a priest you would have died.

KASITILE: Indeed, we quarrelled over land, over the boundaries, on the plain. I hoed someone else's land—the land of a commoner there.

SANGU: They placed something to injure you.

Kasitile paused in his narrative and we asked how the 'something' operated.

KASITILE: In dreams, by means of their witchcraft.

The Sangu told me: 'It is this which causes you to cough continually, but there is something else also, you did not move to the plain from here without trouble.'

KASITILE: No, I moved with an accusation against me.

SANGU: Yes indeed, you did wrong and now your fathers are very angry.

KASITILE: Yes, I cut a tree.

SANGU: Mother! You cut a tree? The fathers and Kyala are brooding over you, Kyala is angry and broods over you. Pray, pray very much. It is you who are throttling the cattle of the country.

We expressed surprise and Kasitile continued: 'Yes, indeed. The Sangu said: "It is your wrongdoing (in cutting the tree) which is causing the cows to abort. I will clear out the thing which came with you from the plain. Bring it, tomorrow." He's a great doctor, Mwai-paja.'

The astonishing thing was that Kasitile, a man of considerable intelligence and inclined to query the truth of the revelations of some oracles, was so much impressed by the fact that the foreign doctor (staying in the country) knew that he was a priest and had sojourned in the plain, though to anyone knowing KiNyakyusa well his connexion with the plain was apparent in his speech, and his bearing indicated him as a periwage.

Talking of the divination three days later, Kasitile told us the Sangu doctor had said: 'You have done wrong at home. This Kyala (pointing to the little pot into which he was looking) knows that Lwembe and the Kings and your father are angry, your father is very important, he works with Kyala, he is with him.'

As a treatment for the cough the doctor put various ingredients with

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783 Why had Mwaipopo refused so long to enter into relationship with
 782 Mwaseba? Mwaipopo explained that the delay was on account of
 [684] Mpeta. 'Let my wife come first,' he said, and told how, when the case
 first came to light, he had taken Mpeta to his kinsman Mwaiteteja,
 who took her to Mwaseba's village headman, Kakuju, and he to her
 people. She must come back the same way, and has not yet done so.
 Ngulyo said that at first he had been inclined to criticize Mwaipopo,
 but now saw that he was right. Kasitile spoke of the enormity of
 [835] Mwaseba's offence, for Mpeta is a kinswoman of Mwaipopo's wife
 Kalobo, and on the death of her son Mwakalobo, Mwaseba was put
 in his place, so he has seduced a woman who, by legal fiction, is his
 mother, as well as the wife of his father. His act is *double* incestuous.

[686] They then spoke of the separation of those who pray at Mbyanga
(vide supra, p. 80) and blamed them for it. 'Have they millet though?
 Kyala judges them himself.' Then Kasitile reproved Mwaipopo (the
 chief) for another matter. 'But you, Mwakagile (116, identified with
 his grandfather 59) have little wisdom left. Why did you not give some
 of the beer which we drank recently at your house¹ to the people of
 Ipinda, the BaKalinga? The food from a distance you should divide.'
 And Mwaipopo agreed meekly [i.e. Mwaipopo has built with his
 young wives away from his inherited wife Kalinga (senior widow of
 115) and is apt to neglect her; he must send some of the 'food from a
 distance'—ceremonial presents from affines—to his senior wives, not give
 it all to his friends and young wives.]

Then there were mutual compliments and self-depreciation between
 Kasitile and Kinsogota (the commoner priest). Kinsogota pointed to
 Mwaipopo and Kasitile, and said: 'You are impressive you, you are
 impressive, we are mere cannibals (*bafabanda*).' Kasitile replied: 'You
 are impressive yourself, if I look at you my body changes.'

Suddenly Kinsogota got up and pretended to go: 'I am off, friends!'
 Ngulyo started to protest: 'We have not yet finished, we are speaking.'
 But Kinsogota said, 'No, you told me to "be off"!'. He went outside but
 returned admitting he had been only pretending. Mwaipopo: 'Yes,
 do you think we don't know you? Drink! Why do you not drink?'

The Mwamakunda began to ask angrily: 'Why do you shut up
 words in the heart? Why? Do you wish that Mwakiambwe (i.e.
 Kasitile, 86, identified with his great-grandfather, 30) should become
 a fool? Kinsogota answered: 'We have not yet done so, Mwamakunda
 (Mwamakunda), we have not yet; do you think we are angry? Who
 went to fetch Kasitile from the plain? It was we, we went ourselves.'

Ngubakosa took up the matter: 'We have power we have, if we
 please we can give the chief worms.' (This was said fiercely; Kasitile
 and Mwaipopo listened without comments. It was the crucial moment

¹ Sent as a present by Mwaipopo's affines.

783 them to speak out, because if they do not admit that it is they, then the
782 ritual fails.'

QUESTION: What does that mean?

KASITILE: It is witchcraft!

754 QUESTION: Witchcraft? (in apparent surprise).

KASITILE: Yes, it is their witchcraft, the priests gathered with the shade, they bring a chill on my body.

QUESTION: Pythons? (still in surprise).

[775] KASITILE: Yes, they fly in their witchcraft to come here, they speak with the shades, saying: 'Punish him! Let him find us something to eat!' They call the shades to help. Hence I sought something for them to eat that they should be satisfied.

QUESTION: But I thought witchcraft and the shades were quite separate? (still in apparent surprise).

KASITILE: No, they are together, look you, did not Kisogota boast? He said, 'Indeed we came, it is us, it is us. Why did you cut that branch? But now there is no accusation against you.' He boasted very much. He said: 'We have power, if we like we can give him worms.' [It is Njobakosa who was heard to say this, but Kasitile's personal quarrel was with Kisogota.] Did I not tell you that I had worms when I came up from the plain? I had them! I went to doctors and the diviners said: 'You are a chief, you were in the plain, why do you not kill a bull on your return?' Then when I killed a bull the worms disappeared! Where did they come from? They came from the priests, they called the shades to their aid. So I admitted to Kisogota, saying: 'Indeed I have done wrong, I your wife, I Maloba' (86, the feminine form of the name is used).

QUESTION: So, a white person (*amwila*, *vide infra*, p. 141) cannot be a priest, but only a witch, a heavy one?

KASITILE: Yes, indeed, how can a white person take hold of the ritual? His fellows will drive him away. See! To a ritual do we call everyone?

No!

KASITILE: And is my home near to Kisogota's?

No, he lives at a distance.

KASITILE: Yes, indeed, it is the black ones (*bania*) whom we call because it is they who punish us chiefs.

[668] QUESTION: Well, then, is the anger of the shades always provoked by the witches? What about sores (*iminda*) on the mouth?¹ What about
[775] madness if a commoner does not perform the death ritual?

[753] KASITILE: No, I do not lie, that is different. Sores on the mouth come from the shades, the witches are not there, and if a commoner fails to perform the ritual, madness also comes from the shades, it comes

¹ Cf. Monica Wilson, *Ritual of Eldship*, pp. 181, 213.

KASITILE THE PRIEST

139

indeed from the whispering of men and the shades here, but people speak openly, saying: 'Why does he not celebrate the ritual?' The witches do not come into it.

QUESTION: Well, when the witches do throttle someone, do they always call shades, or not?

KASITILE: No, sometimes they throttle a man alone, and the shades are not there.

QUESTION: But your sickness?

KASITILE: Now the priests in their witchcraft gathered with the shades. [793]

The day after we had celebrated Njobakosa came to my place and said: 'We have finished then!' I replied: 'Yes, my body is better now, but the cough is separate, it is from Kynala.' And did you not hear what Mwalipopo asked in his cups—'How did the doctor (the *hangu*) know that you are a priest? And that you had done wrong? Indeed they (Kisogota and his fellows) had told him?'

QUESTION: What did he mean by that?

KASITILE: That they had gone to the doctor in dreams to tell him.

Asked about Kisogota's words: 'You are impressive, we are cannibals, we are', Kasitile explained: 'It means, "You chiefs kill cattle for us, you are impressive, that is your impressiveness. Do we kill cattle? No! We eat men, we are witches." Because when we have killed cattle they receive blood, their witchcraft goes away, it stays in its house.'

QUESTION: And your reply, 'You are impressive, you are?'

KASITILE: I replied: 'You are impressive, you are, you are witches, if I were alone what would I do? It is you who brought the chilling breath on me and said I had done wrong. Even though I have not done wrong, you wish to eat meat. If I walk about among you, my body shrinks, it fears.'

Mwalipopo (the chief 1:16) had also prayed with water the night before the sacrifice, he helps me in prayer and if he prays at his house, I help him. We pray with water to bring out everything; if I do not pray with water then something is left within. I summon all the gods, all the fathers, and all the shades. (*Apa takwiputa nameri ho kuyupa iliyi loye, lonyi ndikwiputa nameri po liyole lino nkal. Nihangula Ayale guma, lonyi guma, abayala bwa.*)

QUESTION:

KASITILE: Yes, when Kisogota and his fellows came in their witchcraft to call my shades to their aid, I saw them in dreams, I saw them! And if they correct Mwalipopo like this in witchcraft, together with the shades, he sees them; he complies immediately, he seeks a cow. And if they just come to throttle me I see them. It is the village headmen of the country who come to throttle me, the shades are not there, no, only Kisogota and his fellows, they stand with the shades, not the others they come and suck my blood and they go away again. I do not speak,

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754 but I see them. It's taboo to speak. They must seek blood and they go
775 off; we fear them!

753 QUESTION: Why do you chiefs never speak out if you are throttled?

753 KASTULA: If I speak how many would there be to name? Very many!

754 For us it's taboo to accuse a man of witchcraft, but the commoners
754 accuse one another. Look you, do few people keep you company?

Many!

Like us chiefs, everyone comes. It's taboo for us to speak out, we
fear. Look you, when Mwambene (Mwalipope 116) and I were alone
we feared to throw out the beer, we said: 'If we throw it out will they
leave?' But when Kinsogota came, he said: 'All right, I will throw it
out myself.' We fear the fierce great priests, the terrible witches, they
are angry.¹ We shrink when they appear.

[632] The village headmen of the country call on the priests for help
[771] against us, they whisper by the fire, the priests come in their witchcraft,
they call on my shades saying, 'Let us punish him', also they eat,
together with the shades. Our shades never initiate anything, never;

they look to the priests. But with a commoner the shade may initiate
matters himself. Yes, people whisper indeed, but is that witchcraft?
No! They whisper openly and ask, 'Why did you not perform the
ritual?' But even although people are silent, still the shade comes
saying, 'Why did you not perform the ritual? I am on the road.' He
initiates the thing himself.

QUESTION: But don't people eat meat at the ritual of a commoner?

KASTULA: Yes, and if he does not celebrate it they accuse him, but they
accuse him openly.

QUESTION: If the heir buries him with a few cattle?

658 KASTULA: If a rich commoner dies and the heir buries him with only
775 one cow, the shades are angry and the people also; their chilling
774 breath comes on his body, perhaps he falls ill himself, perhaps his
child falls ill, but the people and witches do not meet together, people
are angry here, and the shades there; all of them and the shades too,
because he has celebrated with one cow only. People are angry because

[717] they wish to eat the meat. But the oracle says, 'The shades are angry.'
It does not speak of people, it knows that people also are angry, but
it speaks of the shades. And at the celebration he prays in the evening,

[783] the next day he calls people and kills a cow, and throws the sacred
meat in the banana grove, saying, 'Here is your meat, father.' People
say, 'Indeed he did wrong, his father was angry', but they do not
condem saying, 'It was we', no, they say 'the shades'...

[826] We chiefs have bodies which are different, the commoners arrived
[854] first in the country, they ate raw food, we fear them saying, 'They eat
raw food.' It is we who followed and brought fire. To us they condemn

¹ *Shingwe* (shin) *shikala*. The noun class implies size, strength, and dislike.

953 and achievement. An account of the treatment of a field for
578 protection against wild pig emphasises this.

If people wish to protect a crop from wild pig they go to a doctor to
789 ask for medicine. When he gives it to them he tells them that there
must be no quarrelling in the home after they have barricaded the
241 field. Four women go to the field with the husband of the one who
[649] cultivates it. They go after sunset. One woman is shaved; her head is
a symbol of the garden devastated by pig. A second woman, who keeps
[302] her hair, has a head-pad on her head and carries bananas with medi-
cine. She enters the field and eats the bananas. The husband climbs
a hill at a little distance, and two of the women go into the long grass
close to the field. The bald pate twists a head-pad and the one with hair
smears it with medicine and as they do so they look towards their
[531] husband and abuse him saying, 'You lay with your mother', and he
swears at them saying, 'The leather aprons of your fathers' . . . and
many other insults. Then the women walk round the edge of the field,
sprinkling medicines, and they go out the way they came in. The
circular pad is a symbol of the barricade placed round the field. When
[242] they return home they do not eat but go to sleep hungry (though the
clever ones eat beforehand). If they quarrel, the pig finishes the food.
It is as if quarrelling destroyed the fierceness, the power, of the pro-
tective medicines; you must put aside all quarrelling that the medicine
may be powerful. If the pigs come it is as if there were a quarrel, so the
woman and her husband quarrel in the field mimicking the pig. The
husband on the hill is like the pig approaching the field, his wives in
the long grass also represent pigs. . . . The husband and his wives
quarrel only in the field. If, when the maize is ripe, the husband beats
one of his wives for any cause she does not go to pick the maize herself,
a friend picks it for her. If she goes in her anger she finds the maize
finished, nothing but earth is left.

789 Here the link between medicines and morality is made plain.
649 Quarrelling weakens medicines of all sorts and renders them
ineffective. But a mimic quarrel between husband and wives in
the fields renders the medicine effective. It represents the battle
between the pig and the medicines. There is a suggestion else-
where (pp. 69, 113) that pigs are not by the shades when kinmen
[775] or neighbours quarrel, but in the account just quoted it is implied
that quarrelling in the home directly injures the medicine.

278 In themselves, many medicines are neutral. They may be
754 put to good or evil ends, but because they are mysterious and
759 powerful, they are feared, in the same sort of way as atomic
energy is feared in contemporary society. Men use medicines
themselves 'for purely peaceful purposes', but they are shocked at

MEDICINES

147

the prospect of their enemies using them. The notion that medicines are a weapon which may be used rightly or wrongly is very clearly brought out in the attitude towards 'making' animals. If a private individual 'makes' lion, or leopard, or crocodile which kill men that is sorcery—there is no question about it—and we heard of at least one man who had been driven from his home because he was reputed to have made leopards which killed children and cattle,¹ but when Mwakanyunde 'made' lions which drove off pig and did not attack men, that was a public service (side p. 69). And when one chief uses lions in his conflict with another the action is felt to be comparable with war, rather than murder. In February 1937, four lions were hunting in a piece of bush country near the salt lick, which two chiefs claimed. Mwanumbwe, a chief from the hills, had sent some of his men to clear fields in the bush, but Mwakagile (50, or his heir), the neighbouring chief, objected saying, 'This is my land.' There was a long case and finally the District Officer gave judgement in favour of Mwakagile and refused Mwanumbwe any compensation for his work in clearing the bush. 'You got a crop for your labour,' he said. Mwanumbwe was incensed by the judgement and grew even more angry when his men elected to remain on the land they had cleared and became men of Mwakagile. So, everyone said, Mwanumbwe had sought medicines and created these lions. They killed seven cattle in a few days, attacking even by daylight. 'Yes,' we were told, 'there are always lions in the bush, but they do not ordinarily kill cattle as they have done now.'

Another chief who tried the same sort of thing was not so successful. Some time ago the chief Mwakila made elephants, he turned his wives into elephants and they ate the bananas of Malapula, but Malapula said, 'Let's try', and he created much rain which poured down on to the elephants and those wives died. Then Mwakila was defamed. How about you Europeans? Have you this custom? Do you turn a wife into an animal?

'No!'

'We have it, if I choose I give my wife ingile and she becomes a lion which roars, it roars and eats people.'

¹ Cf. Monica Wilson, *Chief Gungu*, p. 179.

² This, and the tale of a young man fleeing from justice who obtained a medicine to turn himself into a lion, were the only accounts of 'branchings' on hand—usually the medicines themselves (such as those of a chief) turn into animals, or the young of ordinary lion, leopard, or crocodile 'wear' the medicines and become attached to the 'owner' who feeds and commands them.

787 A second class of medicines is not neutral at all, but itself
 [278] selects between right and wrong. The most famous is the *mwafi*
 ordeal which is used to reveal the truth. The *mwafi* poison was
 formerly administered by a doctor,¹ before witnesses, and the
 innocent were believed to vomit almost immediately, while the
 guilty did not vomit at all, or were slow to do so, and fell ill, some
 even dying. Nowadays *mwafi* is administered only in the greatest
 secrecy, but various minor methods of divination, all of which
 turn on the correct use of medicines, are in common use. The
 'divination with porridge' has been described (*vide supra*, p. 101).
 The medicine added to it is spoken of as 'a kind of *mwafi*'. Another
 method is to rub an inverted wooden cup on a smooth board.
 Questions are posed, as to the porridge. When the answer is 'no'
 the cup slips; when the answer is 'yes' the cup sticks. Sometimes a
 stick of musk wood is rubbed on the ground in place of the cup on
 the board, and there are half a dozen other methods using bells,
 horns, segments of bamboo, a pipe, or boiling water. In each case
 virtue lies in the medicines added to the porridge or rubbed on to
 the cup or stick, and into scarifications in the diviner's hands. An
 ordinary man who has not been treated cannot use the instru-
 ments, and porridge without '*mwafi*' is useless.

751 Certain medicines used for protection and to wreak vengeance,
 752 are also thought to be selective, and to injure only the guilty.
 753 These are *hema*, owned by doctors. *Mwanjisi* (who came of a
 family of doctors) told us:

[776] My father had a water-buck horn filled with medicines and cinnamon,
 as a protection against witches. He used it, like other doctors, for
 burning the grass, for burning the rubbish heaps before planting millet,
 and for protecting a child. When the millet crops are poor, people say
 the witches have eaten it, and the next year the chief sends for the
 doctor and his protection horn. . . . He comes and makes fire and
 roasts the cinchona with cinnamon from his horn, and each pile of weeds
 is lit from that fire. . . . He sends some to the chief to fire the grass for
 fresh grazing. Then there is much milk, the cows that eat that grass
 give much milk for the witches may away and neither eat the millet
 nor trouble the cows. So with a child, if a man has lost many children
 and has one left, he calls the doctor to come with his protection medi-
 cine (*lipanga*) and treat the child with medicines from his horn as a
 protection against witches. My father used the same horn for all
 these things.

¹ For a description of the procedure, cf. *Isidore Wilson, Good Company*, pp. 117-18, 127-8.

MEDICINES

149

If a man has quarrelled with a *Wanman*, or is conscious of having bitter enemies, or hears that someone with whom he has had a dispute has 'gone to the doctor', he is likely to go to a *horn doctor* for protective medicine, even though he is perfectly well. [751] [578]

'The *horn*' is believed to discover and punish the guilty whether they are known to the injured or not, but if someone uses it without just cause the medicine will recoil on himself. The seven cases of using the *horn* reported to us¹ were all used in revenge: two for theft, two for seduction, and three for withholding cattle due. And it is revenge that was emphasized in one account of the treatment: [789] [751] [754]

If someone has stolen my cow I go to a doctor and pay him a bull. Then he prepares the medicine (the *horn*) and stands facing it, with a spear over his shoulder, pointing towards it, and he speaks aloud saying: 'So-and-so, if you have not taken the cow you will recover, if you have stolen it you will die.' Then the breath (*ndaga*) goes to the man named and if he has really stolen the cow he dies. . . . [645]

But another informant, listing the contents of a '*horn*', stressed the protective element. It contains 'the bile of a crocodile, the skin of a python, and *igifala* medicine (*ndi* p. 58) which has been used to kill men' . . . [278]

If a witch comes to threaten and kill you then the bile of the crocodile threatens and strikes him (the witch), and the *igifala* does the same, it is to kill the witches, it scares those who come to threaten you. The skin of the python means that if people come to threaten you they find you have changed yourself into a python.

Another type of vengeance magic, *thapa*, is thought to work only between blood relatives.

If your father-in-law is angry it is your children he kills, not yourself. If the doctor says the disease comes from the woman's side of the family the protective medicine is given only to her, not to the man; if from his side only he is protected, not the wife. The relative who is angry drinks a medicine; he puts a bee-hive spear into the fire and when it is red hot he strikes a *haceta* socket with it and speaks the name, then the *haceta* man who is mentioned dies. [578] [578]

A third type is that used to secure property (*shamaga*) and scare thieves or adulterers; for the exclusive rights of a husband over his wife are treated as property rights. Often a medicated stick is placed in a field to ward off thieves, and some husbands [645] [645]

are said to give their wives a medicine (without their knowledge) which will cause any man who lies with them to fall ill of gonorrhoea or some other venereal disease. Many Christians believe in this medicine and some inquired whether Europeans did not use it also. One family of doctors are specialists in it:

The sons of Manyafu are very famous, they are great doctors. People fear them very much. No one can steal anything belonging to them or run off with their wives. If a man runs off with a wife of theirs, he will return their wife and pay. . . . Because when he has slept with the woman by night they stick in each other's nostrils, the woman sticks in the face of the man and he likewise in hers. And if rain falls by night the roof comes off the hut in which they sleep and the rain enters. Perhaps the man quarrels with the woman, perhaps frogs and snakes are numerous, perhaps guards sprout in the house—sometimes they sprout bringing evil. So it is also if a man has run off with the wife of another and the husband goes to the sons of Manyafu. They agree to work, but he must pay them.

Lyandileke, whose husband's family have owned a 'horn' for generations, was very insistent that vengeance magic maintained law and order for it could injure only the guilty. 'A thief feared to steal lest he be caught by my father-in-law (Mwaisyelage). He feared the horn if he used sorcery. He feared to seize another's cow thinking, "They will go to Mwaisyelage".'

And protective medicines which cause an adulterer to fall ill of gonorrhoea, or a thief to die, are considered perfectly legitimate; the misfortune would not have befallen the man unless he had done wrong.

The prohibition by the government of the *musaf* oracle has puzzled people. Medicines are admittedly dangerous, but it is held that Europeans 'encourage' witches and sorcerers by forbidding the use of the one effective weapon against them, and doctors with vengeance magic or other strong medicines 'fear the face of the *musaf* doctors'. There is an inescapable contradiction here, the Nyakyusa relying on *musaf* and vengeance magic as a means of discovering criminals, and the Europeans punishing any doctor found administering poison, or intimidating people by threats. Furthermore, it is widely believed that Europeans themselves use strong medicines made up with blood. Any Europeans without an obvious occupation are suspect of being *akapandata*, who go around killing people and taking their blood for the Government to use for medicines. One of our European friends,

MEDICINES

151

a missionary, was warned by her servants before Godfrey Wilson's arrival in her neighbourhood 'not to go out at night as there were *alekandats* about, sent by the Government to kill people and take their blood', and women going for firewood made a long detour to avoid his camp. One was overheard asking when she caught sight of him: 'Is that the man who kills people?' Angumbwike explained that, since all really strong Nyakyusa medicines contained human blood, it was argued that European medicines, which were so powerful, must contain it also. 'They follow their own customs.'

It seems obvious to the Nyakyusa that Europeans must have strong medicines because their confidence and success are so great. Moreover, it is held (in theory) that they are immune to attacks from witchcraft. X, who had been a clerk and lost his job, and was bitter, expanded on this:

People say that Europeans have *ispifella* (side p. 98), see they are brave, they do not fear, if someone wields a spear they do not fear, they just come to him, they are very brave. And also the witches say that they are unable to choke Europeans. When we hear people boasting of their mystical power (*amanga*) we always say to them: 'But if that is so, go and choke a European, show us!' Then they always say, 'Oh no, we can't do that, when we go to a European house at night we find it all lighted up and flaming, we can't get near them.' I think this is the power of the Holy Spirit which you Europeans have. [775]

He came of a well-known family of doctors and perhaps spoke from first-hand knowledge. He just laughed at the suggestion that the light might come from lamps. But the fact that Europeans were held to be immune did not prevent our servants and friends attributing our recurring attacks of malaria to witchcraft. [753]

(c) DOCTORS

Among the Nyakyusa, as perhaps in every society, the doctors with the greatest reputation are those at a distance, and a high proportion of the practitioners in the country are of foreign lineage, their fathers, or grandfathers, or great-grandfathers having come in, bringing medicines with them, and begun to practice. In fact, we were assured that there were no Nyakyusa doctors who were famous, they were all Sanga, or Kings, or Kis, or from Ngonde or Misuku in Nyasaland, but detailed investigation proved this to be false. The trade in medicines from a distance is a very old one and continues today. As we have seen,

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enraged and men should be *mushe*, pure, innocent, without anger in their hearts. But, as has been shown, this quality of purity is the very *opposite* of spiritual power (*amanga* or *abanga*). It is attributed neither to *Kyala* and the other heroes nor to the priests; according to *Kasitile* (p. 158) a pure person cannot be a commoner priest and the chiefs themselves, though *mushe*—*pale*—by comparison with the black commoners who are witches, are also 'heavy' (*aisa*) with the medicines they have drunk. Men become *mushe* by confusion; 'speaking out' is a condition of efficacy in sacrifice and the officiant blows out water as a symbol of bringing up all the anger that was in his heart. The parents of twins and the priests of *Lalaga*, having celebrated their social rituals emerge, crying, 'Tali hali—we are pure. The very quality which rituals produce in men is the *opposite* of that which characterizes their heroes, their priests, and their rulers. Gashed whose 'strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure' is wholly foreign to Nyakyusa thought.

Truthfulness was never mentioned as a characteristic of the righteous or the pure, nor is it a quality of the heroes or priests. Men censure one another for *abanga* which is commonly translated as 'lying', but means rather 'speaking indifferently'. In one Nyakyusa text the child who is told certain ritual secrets by his father and reveals them when he should not is *abanga*, and this is an accepted use of the word. No burning concern with truth or falsehood is apparent in the Nyakyusa tradition though they are passionately interested in what they conceive to be right and wrong.

The conception of witchcraft and sorcery implies a freedom, a choice of good or evil, for the individual. Much is determined. In Nyakyusa thought, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and a child may fall ill because his great-grandfather shed blood or was bound with ropes, and was not adequately cleansed, or because his father has neglected a ward; moreover, kinsmen are 'members one of another', and a ritual neglected by one may bring suffering to others; but there is also the notion of individual responsibility. A witch or sorcerer acts consciously and voluntarily—our informants rejected the idea of a witch being unaware of his actions—and he may repent and drink. There are now, periodically in Africa, 'revivalist' movements in which a pagan doctor or diviner urges men to throw away their evil medicines and repent from their witchcraft. One such movement

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PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

167

of the Nyakyusa converts chose to live, not in Christian villages on mission land, but in Christian sections of pagan villages—often grouped round a school—and after the establishment of Indirect Rule in 1926 the independence of Nyakyusa living on mission land from the authority of chiefs was no longer recognised officially, though in practice they were not regarded as chiefs' men in quite the same way as other people when it came to calling up conscripts for labour service. One of the signs of the difference between pagans and Christian in relation to the chief is that Christians are not particular about sending to the chief the customary cut (the *bwana*) of every animal killed, as are pagans, and even the most conservative do not fear the 'bush' of their neighbours if they neglect the tribute. [341]

After the war of 1914-18 there were missions were established in the Nyakyusa valley: the White Fathers, the Benedictines, and the Franciscan Holy Spirit Association. Two churches of purely African origin emerged: the Last Church of God and His Christ, commonly called the BaNgunda after its leader, and the African National Church led by Paddy Nyanera, which flourished in Ngunda and had a few members across the Songwe in Ba-Nyakyusa. And there was a small group of Watch Tower¹ with Nyakyusa leaders, but acknowledging a vague affiliation with a Watch Tower mission in Northern Rhodesia, and corresponding with the Watch Tower office in Cape Town, from which they obtained literature. As the publications sent were in English or Nyanja, neither of which the local Watch Tower members could read,² and the correspondence was also in English, the link was a tenuous one, but Rutherford's apocalyptic pamphlets, prophesying a speedy judgement on 'the great chasm', were carried about secretly.

Therefore, by 1935 there were a number of different religious communities, more or less closely connected. The Moravians, Lutherans, and Church of Scotland worked in different areas and co-operated closely; but between them and the Roman Catholics and Franciscans and the purely African or 'independent' Churches there was little co-operation and sometimes tension. The great bulk of the Christians (74 per cent) belong to the three long-established missions—Moravian, Lutheran, and Church of

¹ Johnson's Witness. For an account of the nature and international organisation of the Association, see Morris Davies, *Christian Missions*, O.U.P. (1952), pp. 63 ff.

² No members were called upon to write and contribute.

Christians. A revealing phrase was used of Ngondo by one of his followers: 'He is our European.'

Two sets of rituals are celebrated in BulNyakyaan, but there are not two communities. Nearly all the Christians have pagan kindfolk with whom they co-operate in practical affairs, many of the Christians live in pagan villages, though usually in separate sections of them. In the early years of the missions there was clearly some fiction—there were accusations of witchcraft against those who learnt to read and write for if they were not witches how could they have learnt? And there was talk of people 'telling their witchcraft in Christianity'. Pagans averred that in the land of the shades Christians ate frogs—a symbol of difference and dislike oddly familiar to Englishmen. But by 1933 it had become almost conventional for a boy who went to school to become Christian, and if later he became betrothed to a pagan girl, she was expected to join a catechumen's class and be baptized also. The opposition from pagan kindfolk was small except in the case of an heir to wealth or office. Then there was bitter objection. For if a young man became Christian he could neither inherit his father's wives nor increase the influence of the lineage in the approved fashion by marrying several wives himself, and much of the family wealth would pass to a junior line. If a convert were heir to a chiefdom, or likely to succeed his father as village headman, it was felt that he would not be able to maintain his position with only one wife, and succession to a pagan priesthood was totally impossible.

The Christians, for their part, press their pagan relatives to join them in the Church, and a considerable proportion of conversions come in this way. It is common for a mother to join her son, or a younger brother his older brother of the same house. For a father, to whom baptism would mean sending away all his wives save one, the step is a much more difficult one and indeed not pressed by some missionaries, who are aware of the difficulties of elderly women as divorced. But whether kindfolk worship together or not, there can still be unity and friendship.

Thus, in addition to the traditional system of chiefdoms and villages with groups of kindfolk co-operating to perform sacrifices to common ancestors and certain more distant heroes, there are Christian Churches whose members are organized in local congregations, and presbytery or diocese. The traditional religion expresses the unity of lineages and chiefdoms: the new religion

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Q: "Chaps?" And after he went there was much food." In fact, it appears that he took the teachers and schoolchildren to the grove that they might no longer be afraid of it: the girls gathered firewood there, and everyone entered and made a noise, thus breaking great silence. But all this happened long ago (the visit to Mityanga was in 1913 or 1914) and, as was indicated earlier, the common view among Christians is that pagan rituals used to be necessary and efficacious, but are so no longer. We were assured by Christians who themselves took no part in such rituals that "formerly people fell ill if they did not celebrate". Yes, of course, they were very sick indeed in the old days, the whole body would swell. Some even maintained that it was still necessary for pagans to celebrate though not for Christians. A Christian chief explained:

Q: "The sacred grove of Mwachaka is just here in my country; . . . in the old days they used to take a little fresh milk and an unripe corn of sorghum, and put them in the grove. . . . The next day the sorghum was full of milk and the corn was ripe. This was really so in the old days, Kyaale heard such and agreed to their request in this way. We went to ask for rain and food in the grove; the chief would kill a cow and Kyaale agreed, food and rain came. Now that the Gospel has spread, since the Europeans have opened the Gospel to us Kyaale refuses to agree, he says: 'Since they are proud and refuse to hear the Gospel I will discipline them', and he refuses to agree to the old ways."

Q: "What about witchcraft?"

Q: "Perhaps there were people who were witches in the old days; at any rate I know that when milk ran short and a man was accused to the chief of bewitching the earth, the chief used to take his cattle and drive him out of the country, and then milk was plentiful again. Of that I am sure."

Q: "And now?"

A: "No, it is not like that now."

Q: "Many pagans attribute the decline in fertility which is taking place, and the decrease in the yield of milk, to the decay of the old communal rituals and the unhampered activities of witches."

Nevertheless, as the number of Christians in an area increases, the pagans tend to curtail their rituals more and more. The direct parallel between pagan confusion, sorcery, and communion with the shades, and the Holy Communion of the Christian Church is recognized by many, and one is left to replace the other. Regarding the rituals of kinship we were repeatedly told: "We see that the Christians, who say the only rituals are the

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264 killed that the dead man may be received by the shades of his lineage, and his immediate kin eat *kipili* medicines with him for the last time, is marked.

Marriages and funerals, and in a lesser degree births, are occasions for gatherings of kinsmen in Western society—such a penetrating study of kinship as *The Forge* Saps bears adequate witness to this—but the gathering of kinship is a ceremonial rather than a ritual.¹ The attendance of the Foreys men at Aunt Ann's burial service is in no way essential to the service, though it is felt to be a mark of respect and 'proper feeling' on their part to come. So also at Nyakyusa Christian funerals, the attendance of relatives and fellow villagers is conventional—people are shocked if they do not come—but the peace of the departed is not thought to depend upon his kinsmen killing cows at his grave and celebrating the 'farewell'; the ritual element is the concern of his fellow Christians, led by the priest or elder, irrespective of kinship connections. The conventions are binding, however. Though a kinsman or village neighbour is not accused of having killed his fellow if he fails to come to the funeral, nevertheless it would cause offence if he did not come, being free to do so, and should he go to work in the fields on the day of the funeral of a grown man, a neighbour, his position would be intolerable.

[75] At a Christian funeral the emphasis all through is on resurrection and life. The hymns sung to comfort the mourners and the prayers and words of the burial service stress resurrection: 'This corruption has put on incorruption, this mortality immortality' ... 'the body of the flesh is buried, but the body of the spirit rises.' ... 'Our friend is not dead but liveth.' ... 'Oh death where is thy sting, oh grave (baya) where is thy victory?' And the weeping, though extravagant to English ears, is much more restrained than among pagans. Again and again we were told by Christians: [76] 'We do not fear death as the pagans do', and certainly fear is not played up as in the pagan ritual. As one Christian put it: 'The Christian smears himself with mud; only the pagans fear very much at a death, they are desolate, but we do not fear, we say: "Indeed I shall die, but I shall rise again", so we do not smear ourselves with mud and grieve very much. . . . We say: "Why mud? We shall meet with him above." And there is no later shaving or other purification, for the mourners are not identified with the corpse.

¹ For a discussion of this distinction, cf. *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[84]

COMMUNAL RITUALS OF THE NYAKYUSA

² 707 marriage is a sacrament, a mystical union of husband and wife
² 705 who wash together in the 'blood' of the husband's lineage; and at
 death kinsmen share a communion with the 'beloved departed'.

[777] We have already touched on the changing conception of *Kyala*.

⁷ 706 The idea of a supreme power, or creator, distinct from the shades
 and heroes, is clear enough to Christians and is becoming more
² 717 and more familiar to pagans, a young priest even insisting that his
² 715 father and *Kasile* could bring rain only 'if God will' (*sid*
ages, p. 118). Christians believe that 'God alone sends rain', and
 they are profoundly sceptical of the pagan rain-maker.

² 717 The Christians also speak of *Satan* (*Satanu*) whom some identify
² 715 with 'Mhuu' (*Lwemba*) and to whom the more orthodox attribute
 evil dreams of snakes and lions and fighting, which the pagans
 attribute to witchcraft. To the pagan the snake is the witch come
 to attack him; to the Christian it is *Satan* come to tempt him. The
 orthodox, following the teaching of missionaries, deny the exist-
 ence of witchcraft, but most admit to a lively fear of sorcery which
 is rationalised as 'poisoning', though when the conception is
 examined it can be shown to include much beside poison put in
 food or drink. Some of our closest Christian friends admitted their
 fears. X, the Christian wife of a pagan chief, said one day when we
 were discussing witchcraft: 'You disemba like all Europeans,
 you do not wish to admit belief in witchcraft, you are just pro-
 testing.' 'You really think we believe in it?' 'Yes, we all know
 that Europeans just hide their belief.'

● 754 Another chief's wife, Y, also a professing Christian, said: 'We
 all believe in witchcraft, it really exists.' Then she went on to
 tell how someone had come to 'choka' her one night recently
 when she was visiting her own people:

I wake out of a heavy sleep with a pain in the back of my neck and
 my head. It was as if someone was stamping on my head. I wake up
 feeling heavy, I was very heavy. I said: 'If I die, you also will die.
 Who is outside? Who is choking me? Do they not fear God (*Kyala*)?'
 Then someone kicked the door and I shouted, 'Mother, mother?'
 and I heard footsteps going away.

[622] When asked whether she believed that village headmen
 protected their people from witchcraft she went on:

They fight the witches by night, they protect their people, they see the
 witches and drive them away.

Question: How do you know that witches really exist, do they admit
 themselves to be witches?

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

183

Yes, indeed, they boast, they say threateningly (she put her arms akimbo, and emitted a menacing voice) 'Don't speak to me like that?' 797^x
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All through this discussion Y was excited and spoke with vehemence. Next day she came in looking worried and said: 754 ●

About that choking of which I was telling you, what do you think it is when you wake up with pains like that? I'll tell you how it was. I went to see my sister, and found her very ill. She had had a miscarriage and her in-laws had not looked after her properly; they had not sent her to hospital, and when she was lying ill her mother-in-law even refused to come and cook for her. And so I was very, very angry with them. And that night I woke up feeling as if someone were stamping on my head, and I heard the knocking on the door and the footsteps I told you about. What do you make of such things when you dream someone strikes you or is throttling you?

The conception that misfortune is the result of sin, which dominates pagan thought, is reinterpreted in terms of the changing [486] conception of God and the changing social structure. We found that many Christians believed that misfortune had been brought on certain wrong-doers by the 'curse' (dipasa) of a priest or elder, or the anger of their Christian neighbours. A missionary [578] rebuking a man was repeatedly thought to have 'curled' him,¹ so that he lost his job, or fell ill, or was eaten by a crocodile, and in one case a young couple who had not had a child were said to have been cursed by their Christian neighbours because the young man had provided no feast at his wedding. The Christians who believe in such a 'curse' explain that the power comes from God who 'hears people who murmur'—a direct parallel to the pagan belief in the power of senior relatives and neighbours to bring misfortune on wrong-doers—and it is the words uttered—the rebuke of one in authority or the murmuring of neighbours—which are held to be dangerous.

How the reproving words of a missionary may be interpreted as a curse is shown in the following case.

The wife of Z was a thief. She stole things from the kilt of her mother-in-law's hut. She herself began to say: 'I am tired of my husband', and she began making love to other men. When her husband asked her to do anything she refused. She complained to neighbours, saying: 'My husband is a hard man. He watches me when I am preparing food to

¹ Thirteen cases of this type are recorded in *God Among Us*, p. 109. Cf. Monica Shuman, 'An African Christian Ministry', *Africa*, 1 (1951), pp. 289-90.

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cook. I want to leave him,' she said to her husband: 'I want to leave you; I should like to be married to another man, I am not old; I shall not fail to get a husband.' The case went to the Church Session. The husband was called. He said: 'I am astonished. This woman is just making trouble. I have not harmed her. But she is a thief. She steals my mother's things.' She said: 'He is mean. He watches me when I am cooking—either ordinary food or meat. He is a wicked man so I am leaving him.' The Session said: 'Go home and think first,' she came again and said: 'I will leave him.' They said: 'Go and think again.' They sent her home three times. After the third time she came, saying: 'I will leave him.' Then the missionary said: 'We do not find any cause for divorcing your husband. It is astonishing that you, a Christian, wish to go to another man. We find many faults on your side and none on your husband's side. I tell you that the trouble which made you quarrel with your husband will always stay in you. Wherever you go it will follow you.' So she has now become a widow, just going about from place to place. People say that this is due to the words of the missionary.

This story shows very clearly how a missionary's insight into a woman's character was interpreted as an eternal cause of her subsequent misfortunes. The idea that character is a direct cause of misfortune is foreign to the pagan community, and has not been anticipated by many Christians.

On one occasion two Christian teachers and a Christian clerk, who had related several stories in which loss of a job was attributed to a curse, asked our opinion of them. When we explained that we thought that the people mentioned had lost their jobs because they were unsatisfactory servants or teachers our friends expressed surprise. 'I had not thought of that,' said the clerk.¹

Most of the Nyakyaan Christians we talked to believed in a curse exerted by those in authority in the Church; only a few among the better educated of the leaders rejected the idea. And there were lively arguments about the morality of cursing. Many held it was perfectly justified. Others argued that a Christian should only rebuke his fellow 'openly, to his face', and not curse him but leave the punishment of sinners to God; but, as has just been shown, an open rebuke is often interpreted as a curse.

[604] Often a judgement is thought to be delayed. One young man who committed adultery in particularly offensive circumstances was raised, seven years later, by a crocodile, and the two facts

¹ Quoted with permission from 'An African Christian Ministry', *op. cit.*, p. 179-8.

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

185

were connected. And if the expected judgement does not fall when a son has wronged his father it is said: 'The father loves the child so much that he only complains half-heartedly.'

It is admitted (when the point is pressed) that misfortune may fall on good men as well as evil, and then they are interpreted as a discipline, a testing, from God, but this is 'a hard saying', scarcely to be believed. The inequalities in the fortunes of men demand explanations and Christians, as well as pagans, find it very difficult to believe that they are 'natural'. They always suspect some human intervention; they believe that men manipulate mystical power to buy fortune for themselves. The reality of pythons in the belly may be doubted by the better educated, but belief in 'medicines' has scarcely diminished, and new medicines are constantly coming in from outside, among them costly poison medicines guaranteed to cure any and every disease, or to make the user popular and successful. Some sort of distinction between medicines which it is permissible for a Christian to use and those, like love-poisons and defenses against witchcraft, which are not permissible, is attempted, but the line is an arbitrary one. And often there is a conflict in the individual's own mind: as one elderly woman of a chief's family (who would normally have taken the first-fruits medicines) put it: 'It's taboo to use those medicines; even if we do fall ill we say: "No, I will not take it, I look towards God (pointing upwards)."'

Many Christians have pagan kinfolk who are quick to interpret misfortune in pagan terms, and the sort of conflict of ideas that arises is illustrated in the case of a young woman who died in childbirth. She and her father were Moslems; her husband had joined the Protestant Church which rejects all Nyakyua medicines. Her first child was still-born, the second died shortly after its birth, and her father insisted that she should have been taking a medicine which it was customary for women in his lineage (he was a Penja) to drink during pregnancy; the girl herself wished to be treated, for she did not accept the teaching of the Protestant Church on this point, but her husband refused. During her third pregnancy she was ill and finally, with her husband's consent, she was carried to a Nyakyua doctor of her father's choosing; nevertheless she died. Her father and her husband had been on bad terms, the father demanding, rather arbitrarily, the balance of the marriage cattle; and there was a great deal of gossip, some negligence blaming that her own father had killed

her by his anger, others that the husband was to blame for rejecting medical treatment earlier on. The girl herself was reported to have said to her mother-in-law, when she was lying ill at the doctor's house: 'Are you angry with me and has your anger caused the trouble? Perhaps I did not help you in collecting firewood?' But her mother-in-law replied: 'No, I am not angry with you at all.' And the girl continued: 'I know that my father is angry. Someone might go and ask him to pray for me.' There was also tension with the husband's pagan father who had protested that his son was praying for the death of his own children when he prayed with his Pentecostal friends that God's will be done. The Pentecostal people say: 'I like to die. I don't take any medicine . . . if someone dies or not it is all the same thing.'"

Nevertheless, it is true to say that the field in which natural causation is accepted is much wider among Christians than among pagans. It expands very slowly, but the change is evident. Even two cases of 'madness' (*akulope akigili*), invariably the symptom of the wrath of the gods in pagan thought, were interpreted to us by a Christian teacher in terms of grief and shock. The first was of a young man whose wife and grandmother (who lived with him) both died very suddenly, and whose only cow was taken by other relatives and killed for the funeral feast. The loss of the cow following the loss of his wife and grandmother was held to have shattered him finally—'the lineage was finished'. The other case was of a mother, devoted to her daughter, who was distraught when the daughter went off to a distance, accompanying her husband to his place of work. For a daughter to marry beyond easy visiting distance was traditionally inexcusable.

The vagaries of the weather, attributed by the pagans to the neglect of sacrifices or quarrels between chiefs and priests, are explained in scientific terms by some Christians. Heavy rain fell around Rumge in October 1957 and prevented people burning their rubbish heaps to fertilise their millet gardens. The pagans insisted that such early rain was unheard of and kept asking each other what could have caused it. A Christian elder assured us that the early rain was not very unusual in the hill country; he had seen other seasons like it. And in January of the same year the people of Mwasipapa's country were 'astonished' because no heavy rain had fallen and young maize and millet were shrivelling in the ground. They said: 'It has rained all round' and 'it seems as if we had offended Kyala'. Kasile went to divine (*ndi ngwa*, p. 103).

(17) conscious. This disintegration of a former coherence, and a decreasing awareness of the meaning of symbols used, are perhaps characteristic of changing societies in Africa.

(17) Despite the growth of the Christian Church, the great demand for schools, and the dropping of the old rituals directed to family shades and the heroes, belief in the power of medicines flourishes.

(17) Probably most deaths and misfortunes are still attributed to an enemy using either witchcraft or sorcery. The traditional belief in witchcraft is rejected by educated people, but belief in the power of medicines is general. Autopsies still take place and occasionally the poison ordeal is administered in sorcery; one case was mentioned which occurred in 1943. As we have seen, medicines have always been regarded as a potential instrument of individual competition. They are used in the rituals of kinship to ensure health, fertility, and good manners and morals; in the ritual of chieftainship to buttress authority, and in 'sprinkling the homesteads' to fertilize the fields; but also by individuals to steal the fertility of their neighbours' fields and to grow rich at the expense of their neighbours, and it is in their use as an instrument of individual aggrandizement that is most talked of today. There were many reports of their use by rivals to office as chiefs, and the floods of 1935, which washed away the Mbaka bridge and caused a serious landslide on that river, were interpreted as incidents in a prolonged fight between chiefs who were rivals for the position of paramount. The deaths of the heir of one of them in 1935, and of the other chief himself in 1936, were also attributed to their duel with medicines.

(17) Along with the political changes there has been a development of the Churches, more particularly of the Moravian Church, which is now largely self-supporting, with growing congregations served by African ministers.* Until 1938 the two main Protestant missions in Nyakhyusa valley, the Moravian and Lutheran, were staffed by Germans and their funds came mainly from Germany. The war meant the withdrawal of the missionaries and the cutting off of funds. After a lapse of three years one Moravian missionary, and later one Lutheran, came to take charge of the missions and they were reinforced by other missionaries after the end of the war, but the whole policy in both missions is to build up self-supporting churches staffed by African pastors.

The work of the White Fathers mission was not interrupted by

* Change in Ngondo is not discussed.

villages grew ever smaller and became extinct as their members gradually died off in old age. (31)

A Nyakyusa village, then, owed its being to this most significant political, social and religious event. Each village had its area approximately demarcated, and each headman was ritually and magically strengthened in order to lead and protect his men and their families. (21) (22)

This particular system operated satisfactorily in the demographic and land-using conditions of the old days. By the process of bifurcation, briefly described above, new chiefdoms and new villages were formed for each generation. Although the population appears to have been increasing rapidly there was always sufficient land to create two chiefdoms where one had existed before, and to create new villages and more villages than had existed before in the old chiefdoms. The two new chiefs were able easily to move apart and find sufficient and more than sufficient land for their needs. (54)

The system of bifurcation, the ideal of the Nyakyusa, did not always work out so easily in practice - at any rate it often did not in the Lake Plains. Sometimes it did work; for example, the present chiefdoms of Laseko and Kaseko are the two parts of their grandfather's single chiefdom, which split up under their respective fathers. Similarly, the present Mwakipende and Mwanamungu chiefdoms stemmed from a single unit, while the Mwakipende chiefdom itself today is really two indigenous chiefdoms, but the Government would recognize only the senior brother's claim to chiefship and allowed him authority over the whole. Even where a single new chiefdom succeeded the old (frequently as the result of civil war in which one brother subjugated the other) the essential dichotomous arrangement persisted so that the resultant single unit had two distinct halves, each with its own head with his villages and headmen. In any case, whether traditional bifurcation occurred or not, and right down to modern times, new villages have been established at the time of the "coming-out" of the new chief. The best village system showed greater persistence and continued over to type than did the chiefdom and the wider political system. (21)

The real authority of a Nyakyusa chief was not in general very great, although individuals here and there achieved personal importance. A chief was accorded a great deal of prestige and honour, and by tribute and gifts to frequently become personally wealthy. He was supposed to be kept informed by his headmen of all important village affairs and to approve all matters concerning the land, but the village headman was in fact the real land authority, who attended to the details of land allocation and land use within his village. A chief could not do this, and in fact only in so far as he had the support and loyalty of his headmen had he any authority at all. "A chief is a chief because he has headmen," one informant put it to me - he was a prominent chief himself. A villager said: "A chief does not own the chiefdom, or the land. We, the people together, own it." A chief could, without action or action, take any unoccupied land for the use of himself or of his headmen, but he could not allocate it to others; both headmen and villagers could have independently and successfully protested had he tried, as some occasionally did. Land disputes, as commonmen feature in a country where land was plentiful, were settled by the headman of the village in question; they were the private affairs of the village and the chief had no right of interference. Some village disputes first came before a meeting of the headmen concerned with perhaps the assistance of the senior headman of the chiefdom. Only if a dispute could not be settled and if it seemed likely to threaten general peace within the chiefdom would the disputants go before the chief himself, who even so ruled and had to rely heavily on his headmen to secure a settlement. The dispute was his position that he ought to enable to resolve inter-village disputes for fear of inter-village reprisals against him by the unsuccessful party. (43) (54) (55) (56) (57) (58) (59) (60) (61) (62) (63) (64) (65) (66) (67) (68) (69) (70) (71) (72) (73) (74) (75) (76) (77) (78) (79) (80) (81) (82) (83) (84) (85) (86) (87) (88) (89) (90) (91) (92) (93) (94) (95) (96) (97) (98) (99) (100)

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643 Sometimes a chief who was a powerful personality rode roughshod over his headmen and achieved a measure of autocracy; but most headmen would not allow this and in their opposition they had the full support of their villagers, as well as the moral backing of public opinion. There are remembered cases in pre-European days when a chief was deposed or refused to be deposed by his headmen acting together in the face of what they considered to be encroachments on the inviolability of village unity and independence. In any case, however, even the strongest chiefs were little disposed to interfere in the land matters of their villages; few wished to be bothered with the details of land rights. A chief could legitimately complain if he were not kept informed by his headmen, but his approval of their actions -- and most especially in land matters -- was very largely a formality.

Traditional Land Tenure

361
403 As already briefly described, a village comes into formal existence at the time of the formation of a new chiefdom. At that time its building site and arable and pastoral areas were roughly demarcated by the retiring headmen of the old chiefdom. Within the village, members were allocated their house plots and each man tended to take the strip of land stretching behind his plot and make his field there. The land was shared out on a friendly, co-operative basis; the new headman smoothed out any difficulties and settled any disputes. Thus was the pattern of land-holding established. Apart from the relative value of a plot proximate to a man's house, there was little or no cause for dispute as land needs were small and the supply plentiful. An established village could, without notification or special permission, enclose his cultivation to any land which lay vacant -- i.e., which was not in use or under fallow by a fellow-villager. There was therefore no need for a man to try at first to grab more land than he immediately required, nor did he need to be jealous of his neighbour's claims.

1643 A village's rights to the use of his land were quite secure and he had no fear of eviction or of the seizure of part of his holding. It is said that very occasionally a chief might take a man's holding but I think, at least in the Lake Plain, that this must have been most unusual. In fact, of course, so long as a man was allowed to reap his crop there was little value attached to the plot as such when nearby similar ground stood unused. When sought security sat on their plots of land, but in their membership of the village community, which assured them of their continuing right to adequate opportunity for cultivation over the years. However, virtually every man had an alternate security of tenure on his holding during the mature life of his age-village (i.e. until at least the next "coming-out" ceremony), and if he died he too, should he wish, could come and live in his house and cultivate his fields without hindrance. The way in which to cultivate, though of course strongly conditioned by custom and convention, was his own affair, and he sub-divided his holding amongst his own family as he thought fit. He could not, however, allow any of his land to a man living in another village, nor could he permit it to be cultivated by such a stranger.

74
643 Through fear of witchcraft, because of persistent illness, misfortune or other reasons, in order to live near a relative or friend, or to inherit elsewhere, a man might leave his village and his age-group. Then he had to give up his land-holding. When a man moved because of witchcraft or illness (much the same thing and a chief cause of movement) his land was normally left idle pending his hoped-for return, and his former neighbours would do all they could to induce him to return to his old home and fields -- even to the use of force (see Wilson, C. 1938, pp. 22-3). His departure was an occasion against them, and a disturbance of co-operative unity. If the man eventually returned to return, or if it was known that he had definitely left for good, the

(e.g. for fear of witchcraft) and take up the vacant building. Nevertheless in general the building was allowed to lapse and it could be re-allocated by the village headman if need arose; or the elderly widows might be allowed to continue to reside and cultivate as long as they wished. 423

Once land began to become scarce and valuable this loose system could no longer continue. Junior brothers and half-brothers were no longer content to permit the chief heir to take the whole of the deceased's holding to do with it as he wished, and a systemized division had to be adopted. At first, naturally enough, land was gradually brought under the same system which controlled the inheritance of other property, but this proved inadequate - inadequate not only in itself as being, perhaps, too complicated and conducive of disagreement and quarrelling in so far as land is concerned, but also because that system itself was already beginning to break down under the impact of individualism. 423

It was felt that because sons relied on their father in his homestead and fields and in their turn rely on him for a share in the cash-and-kind profits of peasant farming, therefore they should have priority in the inheritance of their father's property. Their father's brothers, it was said, would in any case already have their own holdings in which likewise their sons have prime interest. Conversely, older Nyakyusa men began to be reluctant to take a brother's land (and other property too) on his death, for fear that, in their turn, control of their own land would descend at their deaths to their brothers' sons rather than to their own sons. [221]

As a result of these attitudes a strong desire arose to modify the customary laws in this matter, and the Bangwezi African District Council, with the approval of the Government, has by formal resolution established a new law under which sons may inherit direct from their own fathers. 424

This law is not universally accepted by the Nyakyusa of the Lake Plains and some still will sometimes waive their novel rights in favour of the traditional claims of their father's brothers. They say that they do not desire to see the break up of the wider lineage which, in effect, this new law encourages; they are also afraid of the anger and poison, and thus of the witchcraft, of their uncles. It appears however that the change is accepted by the large majority of the people, for it follows the trend of modern values and kinship sentiments. 424

The principal heir is now the eldest son, but in general he has little direct control over the property and land of his half-brothers unless they are still young, in which case he has a moral duty to act as guardian and custodian, from which then part of the parental holding which had been allocated to their mother by their father in his lifetime, plus any other gains he might have given to any of them direct as individuals. Each group of half-brothers determines the way in which it divides up its own inheritance. The eldest brother of such a house has a definite obligation to see that his junior clients share of the land in so far as its extent and their number will allow. On the whole it is expected by Nyakyusa that the eldest brother will secure the best holding for himself, as he has the new custom, but he cannot deny his younger brothers' claims. Disputes in this matter are not uncommon and the local courts have already shown their determination to support the claims of younger brothers. 425

Very commonly - though it has not yet crystallized as compulsory custom behaviour - a father will give a portion of his holding to his son on the latter's marriage, or at some other or the son decides to give up his own occupation and settle down. It is thought that a married man should be independent economically and that he should be able to maintain his own household; it is realized that there is most likely to be friction in the relations between father and son, especially in this society where it is traditionally 426

number of separate plots per building was less than where land was scarcer; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in those more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 13) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of the trend.

To emphasize the actual situation in 1935, let me rehearse the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Karonia's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipende's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 27). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scatter of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of usage and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is continued through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decidedly entered a money economy and they have begun to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their living and the demand for better living will not be curbed - nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movements of individuals between villages. Such movements were, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the classical rural basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a movement naturally entails ready access to land, not so much land as he would desire even at a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so while the fear of witchcraft remains and while illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable care of a plot. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the ill-effects resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological energy is being channelled now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that husband and villagers still remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must own a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be afforded a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a husband tends to refuse to re-allocate even so all of it to enough his villagers and then to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer, thus desiring to have their own village try to get

123
755

in the open air and not within the hut as on the previous day. But the patient was unwilling to be photographed. He feared, he said, that by the photo I would take „his inner man together with the medicine just accepted" with me to Europe. I tried to calm him, showing him some pictures of my family, and I also let him look through the view-finder of my camera, so that at last he was satisfied. Then, after feeling more confident, he told me the cause of the pains which led him to come to the doctor. He thought he had been bewitched, as he had met a descendant of a man whom some long time ago had killed one of his own ancestors.

124
241
516
756



The Medicine Man
and one of his
patients. The
medicines are
spread out on the
mat.

756

Then the medicine man also explained to me how he had come to the position of a doctor. He did not inherit his position from his father, but he was instructed in medical practices by another doctor. The circumstances which had led him to this position were the following.

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Before his initiation to the medical practice he had entered into forbidden relations with the wife of another man. To protect himself from the magical revenge of the deceased husband and his kin he went to a medicine man to acquire medicines against the expected bewitching. He had to pay two cows for this medicine, and as he had paid them, the medicine-man offered to initiate him into the secrets of the practice of a medicine-man. The character of the client, probably, had won his confidence, and indeed, the medicine-man whose guest I now was, made a profound impression on me.

757

He also described some forms of bewitching¹ for vengeance. For this purpose the average patients travel in his own village offering cows

¹ Cf. G. Wilson, Introduction, p. 271 (added in withdrawal).

against the wrong-doer. It is supposed that after this procedure sickness or even death may come to that person. Another method consists of laying a bewitched object on the path usually used by the offender; with the same result. Such bewitching is practiced, for instance, when a quarrel has broken out between relatives. With the Nyakyusa any quarrelling with kinsmen is considered a very serious crime, as such a conduct is apt, in their estimation, to destroy the highly-valued family harmony.

3. Another day a ceremony (*shampaga*)¹ to end mourning was held at Katanha. Some time before an older child had died, and now they were gathered to take leave of the dead.

At some distance from the hut, on the open space before it, a square represented the grave, in which the blossom of a banana² was interred, representing the dead. The mourners knelt at this grave and touched it with their elbows, knees and foreheads³. Each of the chief mourners had to do this, according to the belief of the Natives, lest he should fall into madness.

The next act was performed by the *shampaga*⁴, the leading person of the ceremony, one in full knowledge of the rites. Immediately before the door of the hut of the mourning person, the *shampaga* threw the collections of corn, brought by the participants in small baskets in honour of the dead, together into a big basket, and uttered the names of the contributors addressing the dead. The other participants repeated these names.

Then the mourners went into the hut; but, after some moments, they reappeared one by one and each one, as he left the door in a crouching position, was softly struck on his back by the *shampaga* with a piece of the trunk of a banana plant. It was explained to me that this ceremony would infuse new strength to the mourners, who were weakened by the death of their relative.

The parties of the ceremony which followed, consisted in the forming of a line by the mourners between the hut and the grave. The persons now stood stride-legged on leaves of banana, the *shampaga* at the

¹ Cf. Wilson, *Conventions of Burial*, p. 8, s. 2: *shampaga*.

² Wilson has described burial (flam, ng) of adult persons; conventional.

³ Which, my description will be of some value.

⁴ Cf. my *Chaga Rites* (Bantu Studies, XV, p. 30).

⁵ Cf. Fildes, p. 30.

⁶ Cf. Macdonald, p. 30; cf. *shampaga*, p. 31; Wilson, *Introduction*, p. 30; *shampaga* (secondary person).